

Rhode Island  
Tales



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**Palmer, Henrietta Raymer, 1867- ed.**

Rhode Island tales; depicting social  
life during the colonial, revolutionary  
and post-revolutionary era



# Rhode Island Tales





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DEPICTING SOCIAL LIFE DURING THE COLONIAL  
REVOLUTIONARY AND  
POST-REVOLUTIONARY ERA

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EDITED WITH FOREWORD BY

HENRIETTA R. PALMER



ILLUSTRATED

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TO THE  
RHODE ISLAND SHORT STORY CLUB  
IN MEMORY OF ITS  
FOUNDER



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## Foreword

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THE Rhode Island tales included in this volume are descriptive of life in an odd corner of New England during the Colonial, Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary era. These annals of a past age are in some instances based on church or family records. Others were taken down from the lips of old people by an early Rhode Island writer, Mrs. Catherine R. Williams, who used them as material in tales written during the first half of the nineteenth century. And still others, by the same author, record impressions of life in the days that followed our War of Independence. Hence we may regard this group of stories as fairly authentic, and as possessing a certain historic interest.

The four tales of Colonial days acquaint us with the life of the early settler on Rhode Island soil. In "The Debatable Ground" we find him a prosperous farmer, cultivating the fertile acres of Narragansett County and marketing his farm produce in New York. In "Rosemary" we meet with the hardy pioneer, clearing the forests and opening up new lands in the Eastern part of the state. In the "Narrative of Rosanna Eddy" a poor farmer, driven from his home by the depredations of the Indians, after heroic struggles to reëstablish himself on the land, is forced to accept the hospitality of friends until he can find work in the town. And, again, in "The Haunted Brook," we see one of the first settlers in a lonely neighborhood of northern Rhode Island—some sections of the state have remained a wilderness to this day—driven away by the *ghosts* of a band of smugglers, or possibly counterfeiters, above whose cave he has unwittingly built his abode.

An historic tale of Revolutionary time—the incident occurred during the occupation of Rhode Island by the Brit-

ish troops—is entitled “The Gould Island Mystery.” The hero of the story is a young Friend—a neutral and non-combatant, like his fellows—who is unjustly deprived of his membership in the Society, and whose loyalty flames up in a passionate love of country, in the service of which he loses his life.

The first of a group of stories of post-Revolutionary date—“Pride and Poverty”—follows the fortunes of two elderly English maiden ladies, who, left destitute and friendless upon the evacuation of Newport by the British troops, proudly refuse all offers of aid from their kind-hearted American neighbors.

“My Nannie O,” a story of the same period, introduces us to a family of aristocratic French Huguenots, who have fled from persecution in the Old World and made Newport their home.

The closing stories of the book—“The Assignment” and “Ruth Glenn”—are by Mrs. Williams, and bear witness to the social changes that took place during the period following the close of our struggle for independence. Ostensibly they are a satire on the fashionable world of her day, but their chief value lies in a faithful and literal portrayal of the lives of the people—the more humble members of society who were falling behind in the struggle for wealth and social supremacy that inevitably follows in the wake of a great war.

A word as to Mrs. Williams, the author of five of these Rhode Island tales. This woman of remarkable mind and gifts, and of a heroism befitting the daughter of a sea captain, was born about the year 1790. She was brought up by two maiden aunts from whose austere régime she apparently revolted, for she left her home, married in another state a man who proved unworthy of her, and after a few years of wedded life left him with her child in her arms and returned to Rhode Island, penniless and dependent on friends for support. From this predicament she rescued herself with the aid of her pen. In 1830, she published by subscription a volume of early poems, and wonderful to relate, the venture

## FOREWORD

was a success. In the closing pages of "The Assignment" we have an interesting account—no doubt, autobiographical—of the methods employed by this enterprising woman in her joint career as author, publisher and business manager. During her lifetime she published eight books—a number of which were reissued, "Annals of the Aristocracy," which appeared in 1845, marking the culmination of her literary career. These tales of domestic life—a compound of malicious gossip, racy anecdote, shrewd observation, and sound moral reflections wrung from a lofty, embittered soul—were literally read to pieces in what their author terms "the homes of the great," and have now become rare items of early Americana.

Mrs. Williams was not merely a popular writer. In recognition of her services she was elected a member of several state historical societies—an honor, as she remarks, not then conferred on *females* in Rhode Island. But were it not for a sympathetic memoir by Sidney S. Rider, published in "Rhode Island Historical Tracts," her name would be practically unknown today. It is to be hoped that the publication of these tales at the present time will serve to call attention to the fact that she made a significant contribution to the literary annals of Rhode Island.

The illustrations that accompany this volume are the work of a distinguished Rhode Island citizen, the late Mr. George C. Mason of Newport, and appeared originally in his "Reminiscences of Newport," now unfortunately out of print.





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# The Debatable Ground





## The Debatable Ground\*

By CAROLINE HAZARD

THE ides of March, 1706! A new year was beginning for the sturdy colonists in their new country, hardly wrested from the hand of nature, and not yet trained to man's will. A new year in the Pettaquamscutt purchase, with its chaotic government, its legislature called by one governor and forbidden by another, its Ranters and New Lights with their ecstatic preaching, its sober and godly Friends, its few Presbyterians, and its many free livers who cared neither for church nor state. A new year, and what would it bring?

Such thoughts the solitary traveler on the new driftway to Point Judith was thinking, as he stepped slowly along over puddles and through mire. It was the first springlike day. A soft breath from the south had brooded over the Point; on each side of him lay silver-shining sea, toward which brown meadowland and low woods sloped. The sun was lowering in the west. He looked at it with the observant

\* Hazard, *Anchors of Tradition*. New Haven, 1924.

eye of the pioneer whose timepiece it is. Two hours more of sun, and then a good twilight. There was plenty of time, he reflected, and took a slower pace. He was just at the beginning of the neck, and three miles further on lay his house, Captain Sewall's house, on the end of Point Judith, for he was Sewall's tenant. He thought of this with pleasure as he slowly walked along, and of the annual visit to Boston to carry his rent and report the doings of the countryside. There was always a dinner at his landlord's, and dame Hannah had always a kindly word and a present to send Mistress Niles. It was pleasant to think of and must come soon. His lease dated from Lady Day, but Captain Sewall would hardly expect him till April, when the roads were better. As these thoughts passed through the man's mind they showed in his mobile face—a good strong face, keen and humorous too, which gave a feeling of trustworthiness and serenity as one looked at it. He walked slowly for a man still in his vigorous prime, with a slight rolling gait suggestive of the sea. Indeed, he had been a seaman among other things, and was still known as Captain Niles.

As he came nearer his own home his thoughts evidently changed, and a darker expression passed over his face. He looked to the west over the sloping land running down to the ponds. They lay there, silver mirrors for the sky. The touch of spring was on their shore, though no green yet appeared. But the twigs were scarlet and yellow, and an indefinable change was coming. A low gambrel-roofed house nestled among some apple trees. A wreath of smoke came from its big stone chimney. Captain Niles frowned.

"The old curmudgeon!" he exclaimed. "He says he's a man of peace and has his slaves fight! My poor Ezra can't use his broken arm! Curses on him!"—fumed the captain, and his face set in hard lines.

The house looked peaceful enough in its little orchard. Nothing stirred but a few white geese, whose feathers shone in the clear sunshine. Captain Niles quickened his pace till he had passed the house, then he smiled a little.



"Captain Sewall will enjoy this story of Nichols' behavior. To have his men come and seize my corn because forsooth he says the ground is his! If we had a broken arm on our side he had a broken head on his. Must be amazing tough, those Guinea skulls! But how will it end? I shan't plant again for him to steal, and he shan't plant or I don't know my name!"

By this time he had gotten well past the house and half a mile further down the road. Though Captain Niles was Sewall's tenant he yet was a landowner also and was buying what he could. Already toward the upper end of the Neck he had a considerable holding adjoining Peleg Nichols, and a fight had arisen, as so often in new countries, over the bounds. As Niles walked along thinking bitter thoughts of his neighbor, he kept a keen lookout on the right side of the road. Presently he stopped with satisfaction.

"There is my boundary brook running full!" he exclaimed. "The old hypocrite, to pretend it isn't to count as a brook, because it dries up in summer! Most brooks do in this country!"

He had now come to the debatable land, lying between two little runnels. The south one was slightly larger than the north, and Nichols claimed that for his boundary.

Captain Niles walked slowly on looking at the broad fields, twenty-five acres at least, he thought, and good corn land too. Only half a crop had he taken from it this year, Nichols having seized the rest. Should he try it again and fight for the corn? He stood looking at it, reflecting. Presently his eye was caught by something moving, far off in the end of the cornfield. Two figures were there walking slowly, and close together. The sun was fast sinking and a clear mellow light flooded the wintry scene. Behind the stone walls were patches of snow, melted and shrunken by the first warm day. Further off the ponds lay gleaming silver gray. A few sheep moved slowly over the bare fields finding little to content them. The two figures drew nearer, and as they came Captain Niles looked more closely, an expression of astonish-

ment on his face. Surely he knew the man; there was something very familiar about him. Could it be his own boy, his Lodowick? Then he smiled to himself. His Lodowick walking with a girl? Surely not, he was almost a child; and the captain's brow puckered as he began to reckon the years. How old was the boy, anyway? Why it was in 'eighty-three he himself had run away with his wife, and the captain's face softened and brightened at the thought. Twenty-three years ago! and Lodowick was born the next year. 1684 that was, and now the new century was six years old. Why, the rascal must be twenty-two!—Twenty-two, just my age thought the captain, when I married his mother!—And he looked again at the two figures with interest. They were nearer now; he could see quite plainly. It was Lodowick bending over a little figure and talking earnestly. But who was the girl? There had been no hint of a girl that he knew of, and the homespun skirt and blue cloak with hood drawn over the head revealed nothing. They walked slowly on, approaching the captain. As he walked down the road they came toward him at right angles up the field. The captain thought over the girls it could possibly be. Not a Robinson, she was too short; the Hazards were tall and larger made, too. The Rodmans, beautiful as they were, had too many lovers probably to care for so young a fellow. Who was the girl, anyway? The perplexity irritated him.

The captain had come opposite the field they now were in, a part of the debatable ground, meadowland, full of stones cropping up. Beside the stone wall which bounded it a tangle of bayberry bushes and wild roses had grown, the red rose hips shining in the almost level rays of the sun. As the captain came near a flock of blackbirds rose suddenly from the bushes, and flew off over the meadow almost touching the young couple who were so near. The captain stood still quite shielded by the bushes through which he could see. They came nearer and nearer. He could hear his boy's voice, soft and gentle with a cadence in it he had not known, and which took him back to his own early days. If only she

is a nice girl, the poor captain reflected. Then his face darkened, as he suddenly remembered that Nichols had a daughter. Anything but that, he thought angrily, anything!

The two came slowly on. Just in front of his screen of bushes they stopped. There was a low murmur of voices. Then suddenly the blue coat disappeared in the young man's embrace. The captain stood rigid. He himself had known it all, and his heart went out in great tenderness to his son. A moment only and the girl released herself and lifted a flushed radiant face with shining eyes full of devotion to her lover. The captain saw her plainly. She was Content Nichols.

### THE OVERSEERS

At the same time a very different scene was going on in the farmhouse among the apple trees. Two horsemen turned in at the lane, just as Captain Niles had passed it. They were grave, pleasant-looking men, mounted on their strong broad-backed Narragansett pacers. Solomon Hoxsie, the younger and stouter of the two, carried good weight, but his horse moved lightly and easily under him. A journey to Providence or Newport and back in the same day was nothing to this sturdy animal. Hoxsie himself was broad-faced and kindly, with fair hair and rather prominent blue eyes. A sensible, solid Friend he looked, and was. His companion was quite different, thin, wiry, muscular, with hair that had once been black and now showed white in places, and a soft dark eye capable of the enthusiast's fire. Such was the preacher David Greene, a man learned in points of doctrine, the most eloquent man in his Meeting. They came slowly up the lane in full sight of the house. Peleg Nichols saw them and his heart leaped. For what could it mean, this conjunction of the foremost preacher and the wisest business man in the Society come to visit him? He thought, with satisfaction, of the large contribution he had made toward the new meeting-house on Tower Hill. His was, he remembered with satisfaction, the largest money contribution made, and made

with some anticipation of reward in his own mind. And surely this was a committee appointed by the Meeting to ask him to be an overseer, to go from house to house putting the queries; in other words, to find out all about his neighbors' affairs, and to sit on the high seat facing the Meeting on First Days. This had been his ambition ever since the early days of his joining the Society, hardly ten years before. And now, his heart swelled with pride, now it was coming to him! He stood at the big horse block as the two rode up, a short sturdy man, showing his yeoman English birth in every feature and attitude. His small shifty eyes—set too close together—watched the two, as they came nearer, with eager interest.

"Hi! little nigs," he called, and two or three ragged little urchins came running up grinning and capering. Hoxsie swung himself off his horse, landing heavily but firmly on his feet, and tossed the reins to one of the little slaves who stood watching. David Greene came up to the mounting block, two roughly hewn granite stones, the smaller one on top so that it made a pair of steps. His mare came close and stood motionless while he painfully lifted his leg over the saddle and, with a hand on Hoxsie's broad shoulder, stiffly descended. The good mare watched him till he was safely down, and then gently moved off toward the barn to which the little darky was already taking her companion.

Once down, both Friends gravely saluted Peleg Nichols. He greeted them with effusion, but they remained grave.

"Come in friends, come in," he said, and bustled ahead of them, leading the way to the great room, which in his case was also the great bedroom. The house had four rooms; the kitchen and living room on the right hand, the master's and mistress's bedroom was the left-hand back room, and the front left-hand room was only used for great occasions and had a high fourpost bed for the unusual guest. Content and the children were in the gambrel roof and a loft above that was reached by a ladder and held some of the slaves.

"Mother," called Nichols, "bring some of the sweet cider.

We have a little left that is very good," said he, turning to his guests. "I put up a quantity of jugs full this year."

"Nay," said Hoxsie quietly, "we will not drink—we have . . ." "Then have a bite," interrupted Nichols, "and stay the night. It is too far to go back to your homes tonight."

"Yea," answered David Greene, "we lodge with friend Rodman on the Saugatucket."

"And see his fine girls," laughed Nichols.

They both nodded gravely.

There is nothing so discomposing to a shallow, vain man, as the quiet gravity of strength. Peleg began to feel oppressed. There they two sat, unsmiling at his small joke, not accepting his offered hospitality, calmly looking at him. He wondered if the business they came on was pleasant business, after all. His eyes wandered uncertainly from one to the other. He cleared his throat nervously.

"We came to see thee," began Hoxsie quietly, and stopped, looking at his companion. Nichols shifted uneasily under their steady mild gaze. David Greene nodded gently for Hoxsie to continue. "We came to see thee," said Hoxsie again, and paused in hesitation. Then, in a lighter voice, "Is thy daughter within?"

Nichols' face showed relief. "Mother," he called, "is Content here?" A sad-eyed little woman appeared at the door, and made a courtesy that savored something of the world's ways. "Nay," she answered, "she left to salt the sheep half an hour ago."

Hoxsie turned to David Greene with an appealing look. "Then that must wait," said David. He continued in a perfectly clear even voice, with no hesitation, and no personal feeling.

"We came to see thee, Peleg Nichols, having been appointed by the Monthly Meeting to that service. It hath been reported to the Monthly Meeting that thou didst direct thy slaves to lay violent hands on the slaves of thy neighbor, Nathaniel Niles, and didst take from him part of his corn,

which thou still hast, and dost refuse to make restitution. Is that a true charge?"

Nichols burst out angrily. "The land is mine and the corn is mine. I warned him I would take it, since he would pay me no rent!"

"How sayest thou the land is thine?" asked friend Greene, quietly.

"It is mine for I bought and paid for it," retorted Nichols.

"Hast a plat of it here?"

"Truly," and Nichols went to the great bed from beneath which he pulled out a small strong box. After some searching he found the key secreted in a hole in the chimney, and opening the box fumbled among a few papers, with his back toward the visiting Friends.

"There," he said triumphantly, "there is the plat, and there is the brook that is my south boundary," he exclaimed, pointing to the watercourse laid down.

"But what is this?" asked Hoxsie, tracing another watercourse laid down on the map twenty rods farther north.

"That is a gully, no brook," said Nichols angrily.

"That is the brook Nathaniel Niles claims as his boundary," said Hoxsie.

"I know it," sputtered Nichols, with an oath on his lips which he checked just in time; "but it's mine, I tell ye!"

"Is there never any water in this first brook?" mildly inquired David Greene.

"Yes, in the spring," sullenly admitted Nichols, "but it is nothing but a gully, and dry as a bone most of the year."

"What time of year was thy deed drawn?" continued Greene. "Hast it here?"

Nichols hesitated but an instant. He saw the drift of the question. "No," he said boldly, though he had just taken the plat out from the folds of the deed in his strong box.

"'Tis fortunate we stopped at Tower Hill," said Greene, and Nichols' face fell, as he slowly drew out a paper and unfolded it. "We made a copy of the record on our way to thee," he continued. "The brook runs full in the spring, thou



sayest," he continued musingly, "and the deed is dated—" he looked through the copy, "the deed is dated April 15, 1704, and it reads, 'bounded on the south by a watercourse running in an easterly and westerly direction at right angles to the driftway leading to the land of Samuel Sewall of Boston, esquire.'"

"I tell you 'tis a gully and no watercourse," shouted Nichols, angrily. "I will not give it up, 'tis my land."

The visiting Friends looked at each other. "Friend Nichols," said Greene calmly, "Thou art hot about this matter. We will report that it is not yet concluded to the next Monthly Meeting. In the meantime thou must seek the light within to guide thee to a right course. I do not conceal from thee that to us thou seemest to be in the wrong. Even if the land were thine, to seize the produce by violence is contrary to those principles of peace consistent with thy profession. Thou hast greatly erred. I trust that thou wilt see thy way to make full satisfaction to the Meeting." He fixed his deep eyes upon the angry man, calming him and subduing him. Then in a lighter tone, "And now we must see thy daughter; I think she hath returned."

Here was release for the moment and Nichols called, "Mother, send Content in." A moment later she came, fresh and rosy, with the March air in her hair, and a look in her eyes brighter and sweeter than any March wind ever created. She had thrown off her cloak and now stood in her homespun gown, with a soft white kerchief crossed demurely over her breast, her slight graceful figure molding the plain garments to lines of beauty, the very personification of springtime. The visiting Friends eyed her kindly, visibly softening as they looked at her sweet, spirited face. But duty was a stern master, and after gravely saluting her, keeping their seats and only bowing slightly, a silence fell. The girl's color rose. She waited in a tense attitude. "Content Nichols," began Hoxsie slowly, "it hath been reported to the Meeting that thou art keeping company with

a young man not of our Society, and the Meeting hath appointed us to warn thee to desist."

Both Friends looked at her steadily, but she did not blanch. "I will not desist," she said calmly.

Her father interrupted her with an angry exclamation. "Keeping company! She is not keeping company, no one comes here!"

"But the damsel says she is," quietly put in David Greene. "Bethink thee, maid, of the gravity of thy case. A true marriage is made by the light of Christ within thee. It is for thy whole life, a solemn thing. If thy friend hath not this light, how can it be pleasing to the Head of the Church? I entreat thee, as a daughter give heed to thy ways." Content was evidently softened by this appeal.

"Kind friend," she answered gently, "I thank thee for the interest in my welfare, but I assure thee it is safe in my true love's hands. He is not of our Society, but he is good. Are there not many divergences of belief among good men?"

"Alas, yes," answered David Greene, sadly. But Hoxsie was getting impatient. "Thou knowest the rules of our Society, good maid," he said. "Thou knowest the consequences. If, after being warned by this visit, thou dost still persist in thy conduct, which is contrary to the light of truth, thou wilt be denied."

"I had as lief be denied as not," cried Content.

"And thou wilt not give up thy lover?"

"Indeed I will not!" cried the girl with blazing eyes.

"Lover, lover, who is her lover?" asked Peleg Nichols, bewildered, for these last questions and answers had quite taken away his breath.

"He is not of our Society," began David Greene soothingly, for Nichols was getting much excited again.

"And his name is Lodowick Niles," said the girl, looking her father straight in the eye.

"Captain Niles's son Lodowick?" cried Nichols. "It shall never be! It is impossible! Outrageous huzzy to think of it!" he shouted.

"This very day I have promised to be his wife," Content answered steadily.

Her slight figure took on a new dignity. She made a stately obeisance, and left the room, while the three men sat stolidly staring at her.

## FATHER AND SON

Captain Niles was in his barn. There was little to do. His horse had been properly groomed, the hay and grain were in order, the milking was finished, and still he stayed.

Fortunately he had had a couple of miles still to walk after that disquieting halt behind the bayberry bushes. At first he had been furiously angry. That his boy, Lodowick, should dare to do such a thing, that he should choose the daughter of his notorious enemy to make love to, seemed intolerable, a thing not to be endured. Then as he tramped the muddy driftway gentler thoughts came. How sweet the girl had looked, that one brief glimpse he caught of her face. And his own courtship came back to him vividly. Had he pleased his father? And the very thought made him smile at first in amazement, and then with sadness. No, there had been bitter scenes between himself and his father. His father had been very unfair, and the thought aroused all the old anger and passion which had slumbered so long.

He stood stockstill, smitten with a sudden thought. Should he be just as hard on his boy as his father had been on him? He stood long in the waning light, memory picturing the past, the years of alienation, the half-hearted forgiveness on each side, and the final wiping out of the sorrow as the old man lay on his deathbed, and it was too late to show him a son's tenderness. Would it be like this all over again? And the captain sighed heavily. Ah, it was years since he had thought of it all, and there it was, as fresh and as grievous as that galling time when, with words of contumely, his father had turned him adrift.

"No," said the captain, "it shall not be." And if he

swore a round oath to confirm it, as was the fashion of the day, the recording angel, knowing his intention, probably put it down as a pious vow.

The summer dragged slowly to Lodowick Niles. His father went to Boston in April and returned with glowing accounts of Captain Sewall's hospitality, of his interest in the case, and his promise to help when he came to Narragansett. But he did not come. The busy planting season passed, the sheep were sheared, the new potatoes dug, and yet he did not come. Captain Niles watched his son with growing anxiety.

About the first of August the sloop was ready with her first cargo to New Amsterdam—wool, potatoes, and cheese—and Captain Niles sent his son in full charge, staying at home himself. "This time you shall have a quarter of the profits for your setting up," said the captain, and Lodowick started in good spirits. Here was nearly a month disposed of, the captain reflected. It would take the sloop about a week to reach her port, then a fortnight would easily be spent in selling her cargo, and a week to return. There would be no elopement in that time, at least.

About the first of September, just as Lodowick was expected back, came the long-looked-for letter from Captain Sewall. It was very short.

Boston, August 30, 1706

To Captain Nathaniel Niles,

Sir:

I purpose (with divine permission) to start for Narragansett about the 15th *prox.* and shall expect to see you about that time.

Your loving landlord,  
(Signed) SAM SEWALL

That was all, yet it brought joy to the Niles household, for now they were sure some way would open to heal the feud and the two young people be made happy.

The fifteenth of September passed in anxious anticipation, but with no arrival. About ten the next morning two horsemen came down the driftway toward Captain Niles's house, one a large fair man who rode carelessly, Thomas Hazard of Boston Neck, they recognized instantly, the other a stranger, erect, vigorous, riding with dignity, and looking about with an air of proprietorship, who could it be but Captain Sewall? Niles and his son received him ceremoniously, and then took him to inspect the place. After all the business had been concluded he turned to Lodowick.

"Well, young sir," he said, smiling kindly, "I understand your courtship hath miscarried?"

"Indeed no, your honor," hastily returned Lodowick, "'tis the lady's father is the obstacle."

"So I understand," laughed Sewall. "Hath he broken any more heads? For a peace-loving Quaker he is strangely consistent! Is the affair as it was?"

"I believe so. I was told the committee of Friends report on his case every month as unfinished business. Hoxsie and the good managers wish not to disown a man who contributes so much money, and the preachers, like David Greene, want to give him a chance to repent. So nothing has been done to him yet, and we are no nearer a settlement."

"Would you be willing to let me undertake to settle for you?" asked Sewall.

"Yes," answered Niles slowly, "but I would not like to give up the land; I think it is mine."

"I think so, too," said Sewall. "I stopped and read the record of the deed at the Town House. I will undertake not to give up the land."

"I shall be most glad if your honor will be so kind as to interest himself for us," said Niles, with a fine bow, and Lodowick inclined also, relief already on his face.

"Then I will leave you now," said Sewall. "Meet me at the debatable ground in an hour's time, and you shall know the result." He would not let either of them accompany him, but rode off alone as they watched him. Lodowick

busied himself in saddling the horses and polishing the silver-mounted bridle, for he knew it was a great day.

Meanwhile, Sewall turned into the lane which led to the house among the apple trees. Nichols saw a stranger and left his work in the field to meet him. As he approached he recognized Niles's landlord, for so he thought him, and his face darkened. He went forward with a surly air.

"Good-day," said Sewall cheerfully, watching him carefully, evidently taking the measure of the man. "Good-day," responded Nichols gruffly. "'Tis a warm day," Sewall continued calmly, "could your wife give me a cup of milk?"

Nichols' face lightened. This was not the haughty great man he had heard of, after all. "Content," he called, "here is a stranger, bring some milk and somewhat to eat, lass. Will you come in, sir?" and he bowed to Sewall, forgetting as he often did, his later Friends' training, and going back to the days of his youth when the gentry were to be treated to all titles of respect.

"Nay," said Sewall, "this apple tree is a fine roof for a warm day," and he seated himself on a rough plank bench under it. Nichols sat down, too, and they looked at each other in silence. Presently Content came bringing a pewter mug of milk and a plate of bread and cheese. "Country fare, kind friend," she said, smiling charmingly at Sewall.

He rose and made her so fine a bow that she blushed. "Excellent fare," he returned, "made better by so fair a Phyllis. Is't your own cheese, mistress?"

"Yea," she answered, still blushing.

"I have tasted many of your famous Narragansett cheeses, and none better," said Sewall. Having waited till he had finished, Content took the mug and plate and returned to the dairy. Sewall turned to her father. "I have eaten of your bread, sir," he said, "you see I come as a friend."

"Yes," said Nichols doubtfully.

"As a friend," repeated Sewall impressively, "and as a



man who loves peace with his neighbors. You are my neighbor, my land lies next yours on the north, and did on the south till Captain Niles bought it of me. I am sorry to hear there is ill will between you."

"There is," cried Nichols angrily; "he has seized part of my land and says it is his."

"The debatable ground," said Sewall soothingly. "Yes, I saw it as I passed. You neither of you could plant any of it this year. Whose sheep were they, grazing in the meadow?"

"Some his, some mine," answered Nichols surlily.

"What is your earmark?" asked Sewall with interest.

"A gad on the right, and crop the left ear."

"Yes, my earmark is two gads on the right. It was my ram I saw then." He seemed to reflect.

Nichols was like a child, his anger was quite allayed and his mind ran on earmarks now. Sewall saw he could make a fresh start.

"Nichols," he said, in a friendly yet commanding tone, "you must think seriously of your position. Remember what the Bible says of altering your neighbor's landmark. You know as well as I do that the first watercourse is your boundary, and that it only occurred to you to claim the second one afterward, when you had the plat made. This is a downright fraud, and see what a position you put yourself in. If Niles prosecutes you and you defend yourself, you will lose the land, and you will be expelled from Meeting for having a suit at common law. If you delay much longer and refuse to make restitution you will be denied by the Meeting anyway, and I know that disgrace would go hard with you."

Nichols had tried to interrupt, but Sewall continued in his even grave voice, fixing the wretched man with his commanding eyes.

"Yes, the disgrace," Sewall repeated with emphasis, "would go hard with you. Now I will make you an offer, for the sake of peace and to save you disgrace, though you scarce deserve it." A ring of contempt vibrated in the strong voice

as he saw Nichols grow pale and tremble. "I will give you the ten-acre lot at the north of your farm which brings you out to the driftway, if you will resign all claim to the land between the watercourses—the debatable ground I call it—on one condition."

"And that is?" asked Nichols, hoarsely.

"That you allow your daughter to marry Lodowick Niles."

"Never," cried Nichols. "I have sworn it!"

"And you a Quaker!" smiled Sewall. "Think of your position, my man. If you do not accept this offer I shall advise Captain Niles to prosecute, and I will select a lawyer for him, and he will win," and Sewall paused impressively. "If you do not defend, you will lose the land by default. If you defend you will lose the land, and be denied your membership which I know is dear to you. If you leave it to the Meeting you know what their decision will be. Solomon Hoxsie, I believe, gave you some pretty plain advice."

Nichols groaned. There was no way out.

"I leave the right and wrong of it to your own conscience," Sewall continued. "You have tried to defraud your neighbor. Be a man and give it up. I provide you an excuse for settlement. My ten-acre lot in my mind is a dowry for your pretty daughter, take it and relinquish your foolish claim, and consent to her marriage."

Nichols sat with his head in his hands, bowed over. He raised a haggard face.

"It is true," he said. "All you say is true. I consent." He got up and shook himself like a big dog.

"Your hand on it," said Sewall, and as he grasped the farmer's hard hand he gave him a long friendly look, a searching look, that seemed to raise all the manhood that had slumbered in the worldly nature.

Sewall drew from an inner pocket a traveling inkhorn and pen, and tore two scraps of paper from a letter. In the fine neat hand of his time, he wrote slowly two short memorandums. "I hereby relinquish all claim to the land between the

two watercourses at the south end of my farm—the debatable ground, so called.” This he handed to Nichols to sign, and pocketed it himself. The other was a memorandum of the deed of the ten-acre lot, which he signed and gave to Nichols. “I will send the full deed from Boston,” he said. “And your promise about your daughter?”

“That is understood,” replied Nichols, frankly.

“I may send the young man today?”

“Yes, the sooner the better.” And Nichols held his head higher and looked more of a man than he had for two years past.

“Give the damsel my best wishes and salutations,” said Sewall, as he rose to go.

“Sir,” said Nichols, haltingly. “I thank you for your—” He looked at Sewall dumbly.

“I understand. Now make satisfaction to the Meeting,” answered Sewall, and rode down the lane.

Captain Niles and Lodowick were waiting anxiously for him. Sewall rode briskly toward them.

“The land is yours, my friend,” he said, addressing the captain, “and the maid,” turning to Lodowick, “is yours!”

“Blessings on you, sir!” cried the young man.

“And now the captain will ride with me to the ferry,” said Sewall, “and as for you, young man, I advise you to go home and don your best to go courting this very night. The debatable ground, Captain, will do finely to set up the young people with!”

They rode off up the quiet road, the cheerful sound of their voices coming back to Lodowick. He did not wait to listen to them, but as he made his way across the debatable ground toward the house in the apple trees the whole world was full of joy and sunshine.



# **Narrative of Rosanna Eddy**





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## Narrative of Rosanna Eddy\*

By MRS. CATHERINE R. WILLIAMS

### I.

ABOUT one hundred years ago, † there resided in the town of Warwick (R. I.) a poor but honest man of the name of Hicks. He was the owner of a small farm which constituted all his worldly possessions, if we except an industrious wife and two small children. The farm—if such it could be called, being a very small plat of land—with industry and economy in that simple age would have comfortably supported them, if it had not been for the near neighborhood of the tribe of Narragansett Indians, whose continual though petty depredations were a source of endless vexation and impoverishment to those who had the misfortune to be nearest to them. It was true, the voice of war was no longer heard on their borders. The Pequods and Narragansetts had

\* Williams, *Tales, Biographical and Revolutionary*, 1830.

† 1730.



glutted themselves with blood, to the almost total extermination of one tribe, a general peace reigned at this time, and the bloody tomahawk and deadly hatchet seemed buried forever. Yet the inhabitants could not forget what had been, and the aggressions of the Narragansetts were therefore winked at. No one seemed inclined to arouse the latent spirit of revenge. When, therefore, any of them chose to walk into a potato plat or cornfield and load themselves with the produce, the general method used to be to keep out of sight, for as none of the white inhabitants could look upon and tolerate such thieving, and they dared not punish it, the only way was not to know it. There were some, however, upon whom these depredations fell hard, and poor Mr. Hicks was one, and he had for some time resolved upon removing. There was but one thing that caused him to hesitate, and that was, that all his wife's connections resided in this vicinity. Many of them had been very kind to him, and particularly a farmer who had married his wife's sister, by name Oliver Read. Mr. Hicks was as poor as he, though not like him the son of a gentleman, Mr. Read's father having emigrated from England many years before, with a considerable fortune which he had wantonly dissipated in luxury and extravagance. I think he closed his career in Newport, but in what year I have forgotten, leaving three sons, Eleazer, John and Oliver, penniless, to be brought up as chance should direct, or as the vulgar saying is, "to scramble for themselves." The three boys proved to be industrious, prudent and thriving young men, and many of their descendants are now living about the state, and are among its most respectable inhabitants.

Mr. Read resolved upon removing to Newport, and persuaded Mr. Hicks to accompany him; but he, hearing there was at this time a proclamation made, by one Mr. Ludlow, for settlers on Cape May, offering a liberal recompense of two-thirds of all land cleared and reduced to a state of cultivation, resolved to go thither. Accordingly, somewhere between the years 1730 and 1740, after stirring up a number

of families in Warwick to embark with him on the enterprise, they set sail.

The Cape was indeed a wilderness, and though Mr. Ludlow himself had a large house and a considerable number of slaves, they had made but little improvement on the lands, except in his immediate vicinity. The new emigrants found themselves introduced into the midst of a cedar swamp, where they reared log huts and commenced clearing the land. The most perfect solitude reigned throughout the tract which the settlers now disturbed for the first time with the sound of the axe and the hammer. They soon found they had more formidable foes to encounter than even the fierce Narragansetts. The swamp was infested by bears, wolves and catamounts, who, although they did not disturb them much in the day, never failed to prowl round their dwellings by night, disturbing their slumbers by their terrific howls and vain attempts to enter. Besides this, the place was beset with hosts of mosquitoes, which obliged them to keep up a continual smoke round the house. Every night each settler lighted a pile of brushwood to keep off the wild beasts and serve as an additional protection to other modes of defense. But adopt what expedients they might, the nightly serenade long continued to disturb them; and often they were awakened, too, by the crawling lizard, dragging its cold, slimy body over their faces or hands several times. When awakened in this manner they discovered, to their infinite terror, a wolf or some other wild animal looking down the chimney hole; and the repetition of this alarm at length convinced them there must be some secret instinct that caused this little animal to warn them on the approach of danger.

The several families that emigrated from Warwick refused to place their huts remote from each other; they therefore erected them within short distances, and formed in the center of the little settlement a common enclosure for their cattle. Sometimes they were let out to graze, and they could not but observe with admiration the instinct of these crea-

tures in making for the burning pile—which was never suffered to go out night or day—when pursued by wild beasts. On one occasion, as some of the emigrants were sitting in the doors of their huts in the cool of the day, they were alarmed by the approach of the cattle; the whole came flying past, followed by an ox with a catamount on his back; his talons were fastened in the flesh, and he was gnawing off the ox's tail, which he had nearly devoured. The tormented animal sprang into the burning brush, when the catamount fled.

Mr. Ludlow occasionally gave great assistance to the new settlers, but the difficulties were so great as to dishearten many. The plague of most new countries, the fever and the ague, soon made its appearance among them; several died with it, and others, lingering, came off in search of health. In about three years, two or three families, discouraged, moved back again to Warwick; but their places were soon filled by others, and emigrants from different states soon began to settle in their vicinity. Still, their lonely and isolated situation subjected them to many difficulties. By a singular providence, however, the family of Mr. Hicks was the only one which entirely escaped the fever and ague; and this was extraordinary, as they were more exposed to the damp of night than most of their neighbors.

Mrs. Hicks being one of those kind, benevolent women who are always ready to attend the sick and afflicted, was frequently summoned from her bed, in the dead of night, to minister to the diseased. On one occasion she was sent for to visit a sick child in the middle of the night, at a residence a mile off. They had to cross the swamp upon a kind of bridge of brushwood piled several feet high, and to pick their way with lighted pitch knots, which served the double purpose of a guide and defense from wild animals. With all the dispatch they could use the child was dead long before they got there, and the afflicted mother, who was entirely alone with it, despairing of human help had laid it out with her own hands. In after life, Mrs. Hicks used frequently to speak of the instances of fortitude and pres-

ence of mind which she witnessed during her residence at the Cape, and to relate this anecdote.

During their residence there, which I think was about ten years, the settlers had brought a large tract of land into a state of cultivation, built many very decent houses, and seen the neighborhood grow up and flourish. But many of them, and Mr. Hicks among the number, had failed to get attached to the place, and he was determined not to spend his days there. He therefore decided to remove, and induced by the persuasions of Mr. Read, who had now been several years settled in Newport, resolved upon removing thither.

With some difficulty he disposed of his house and land for very moderate compensation, and expended the sum in the purchase of a small brig at New York, which he loaded with cedar lumber at the Cape, and proceeded with his family, and one or two others who went as passengers, to Newport.

Before the little vessel had been out twenty-four hours a storm overtook her, in which they drifted about at the mercy of the winds and waves, the vessel having parted her cables and lost her anchor; their lumber, too, was obliged to be all thrown overboard. But at length they arrived at Newport, penniless and in a most shattered condition.

## II.

Worn out with terror, exposure, and bodily suffering, the wife of Mr. Hicks, attended with a young family of children, presented themselves in the dusk of the evening at the hospitable door of Mr. Read, and were received with that cheering welcome and frank hospitality so characteristic of the times. Mr. Hicks had become almost discouraged, but his friends in Newport continued to soothe him and teach him to look for better days. The family of Mr. Read inhabited a small, one-story house, which might well be called a cottage, near the first beach in Rhode Island, and close to a windmill which is still standing, though the cottage has long since disappeared. There was very little room in the

building for the accommodation of guests, but no apologies or complaints of hard fare were ever heard from the lips of its inmates. The family of Mr. Hicks with their brood of little children were carefully stowed away, and beneath their hospitable roof Rosanna, their youngest child and the narrator of this story, was born a few days after their landing.

With the greatest tenderness Mrs. Read nursed and attended her sick sister and her family until her restoration to health and the settlement of her husband, who made out to dispose of the dismasted brig, and finding a tenement in the neighborhood procured such work as he could do. At the birth of little Rosanna, Mrs. Read, who named her after herself, adopted her as her own and agreed to receive her, as soon as she should be old enough to take her from her mother, as an inmate of her family, and bring her up with her own daughter Amey. Accordingly she received her from her mother in the course of a few years, and though they were poor, Mr. Read then subsisting by tending the mill which he had hired, they never had cause to repent of it. They were amply rewarded by her faithful services and the attachment afterwards manifested toward every branch of their family.

The oldest daughter of Mr. Hicks was taken by a relation in Warren, where she was soon married to an excellent young man. She there became a member of what was called the English church, and during the few years she lived, exhibited an example of piety which seemed much above this world, and it undoubtedly was, as she was suddenly called to a better, just after the birth of her first child. Her descendants by that child, a daughter, still live in the town of Warwick. Several of their friends and connections continued their kindness to Mr. Hicks and family during the last years of their life, but the hardships and losses of the early part of it discouraged him, and he continued a poor man to the end of his days.

Rosa in the meantime grew up under the hospitable roof of her Aunt Read. She was, though treated with much kind-

ness, always obliged to work hard. They sometimes had a large family, having several times attempted to take boarders, and their daughter, who always had delicate health, was but little assistance to her mother in the domestic way. The first real trouble of Rosa was the loss of her kind protector and second father, Mr. Read, who was suddenly called from time to eternity a few years after her residence in the family.

There now was an opportunity for Rosa to manifest her gratitude in efforts to console and support her afflicted aunt, and they were not wanting. Mrs. Read had a son, Oliver Read, who followed the sea, and who avowed his determination to support the family and never to part with his mother. And her daughter Amey was soon married to Mr. George Brown, of Providence, and removed thither; about the same time Oliver married a poor but very beautiful girl by the name of Mary Sherman, and took his mother into his family. Mrs. Brown insisted upon taking Rosa with her. Previous, however, to the marriage of Captain Read, Rosa had the happiness of saving his life—to speak after the manner of men.

Captain Read was seized with a violent fever, which soon arrived at the crisis. The physicians, as was the custom in those days, forbade his having a drop of cold water, and protested it would be almost instant death. On the day that the fever had got to its height, he lay apparently dying; his parched lips and swollen tongue were nearly black; and as he had become speechless, Mrs. Read and her daughter, unable to endure the sight of his last agonies, had retired to an inner room and consigned him to the care of Rosa. She then, thinking him dying, resolved to try an experiment which her own excellent judgment had suggested before, but it was forbidden. Hastily snatching a pitcher, she ran to a spring a little distance from the house, and filled it; then carefully wetting his lips she poured in a few drops from a teaspoon, successively, until with great difficulty he swallowed it. She persevered in her efforts until he was enabled to articulate the word “more” in a faint whisper; when gently



raising his head, she held a tumbler to his lips, and to her inexpressible delight he swallowed the whole of it. In a few moments he asked her for more, and Rosa gave him freely as much as he wanted; but she was terribly frightened after, as for a minute or two he appeared entirely gone; and Rosa, putting her hand to see if his heart beat, perceived he was in an intense perspiration. She called in Mrs. Read and her daughter, when he soon began to revive and was able to speak. "Rosa has saved my life," were his first words.



# Rosemary





## Rosemary\*

By HARRIETTE P. RICHARDSON

*"Rosemary, that's for remembrance."*

It was a beautiful morning in the autumn of 1755 when, after the primitive service in the little meeting-house in See-konk, the banns were published between Thomas McClish and Hannah Armington. The simple ceremony that would unite them would soon follow; but ere the wedding day arrived Thomas McClish, who had entered the army at an early age and had served at the time of Braddock's defeat, was summoned to rejoin the celebrated Rogers' Rangers on their march to Canada. He left his betrothed with hopeful words of a speedy reunion. He had distinguished himself for bravery on several encounters with the Indians, and in the last fierce battle he was wounded, fell upon the field and left among the dead.

"Hannah, thee had best think of this again; thee has been very upsetting in thy ways with the good men of the town-

\* From the original manuscript, based on family records.

ship. Thee cannot always have thy father and mother to make a home for thee. I counsel thee to think the matter well over; take thy Bible, and thou may'st get a leading in the right way. Brother Joseph will come to me tonight for thy final answer."

The speaker, Hannah's father, left the house and, mounting the old white horse that had patiently awaited his coming, rode off to join the other townsmen in looking out the best pasture land for new settlers.

Hannah turned slowly from the window where she had been discontentedly looking across the flat Seekonk fields. There were tears in her eyes, but she wiped them away petulantly.

"They are hard to me," she said to herself. "They ought to know that I cannot marry any one else. Have I not been published to Thomas McClish? And had it been but a few days later before he was recalled to his regiment he would have left his wife behind him, and now I am almost the same as his widow. Why cannot Brother Joseph let me remain as I am? I will not marry him. No! Never!" Hannah's pretty mouth took on the decided look that was very familiar on Townsman Armington's mouth when the new settlers tried to alter his arrangements for them or their belongings.

Hannah was a strong, active girl and, besides being very attractive in form and feature, was so capable in many ways that more than one of the struggling householders in the township had tried to make her forget Thomas McClish, or to shake her faith in his constancy if he were living.

Hannah went about her work with far less interest than usual, and the spinning wheel remained in the corner. She had no heart to look into the future, which held perhaps naught but the uncertainty that had made the last seven years one long, unsatisfied hope.

Brother Armington came home to his evening meal. He looked intently at Hannah, but she did not meet his eyes with her own. After placing the frugal meal upon the table

she stepped to the house door and stood looking moodily down the pathway.

Mrs. Armington shook her head as her husband glanced across the table. "Thee had better let Hannah think it out by herself," she said. "I thought Brother Allen would certainly bring her to marry him before last Fast Day, but she seems daft about Thomas' coming back."

"Coming back! She is daft indeed if she thinks Thomas McClish will ever come home. Indians do not keep dead men captive and return them after seven years. I shall tell her plainly that it is her duty to wed Brother Joseph. There is not a young woman in the township who has so many chances to change her state as Hannah, and it is pure foolishness to talk as she does of McClish. If she ever sees him again it will be in Heaven."

A small figure was appearing in the distance, and a little girl came up the cart path toward the house, and pushing back the hood that covered her little brown head, said softly, "Can thee come over to our house, Hannah? Mehitable says Dorothy is worse this even."

Hannah took the child's hand and they stepped into the large, bare kitchen, spotlessly clean. With its huge, open fireplace it looked homelike and pleasant to her, and she had no wish to leave its peaceful shelter for any other home.

"Father," she said, "Mehitable has sent for me. Dorothy is still ailing, and I may stop the night. Can thee spare me, Mother?"

"I can spare thee to those who need thee more. I trust the child is not seriously ill. Mehitable is overwrought, I doubt not, but it will ease her to have thee with her."

There was no further leave-taking and Hannah, still holding the little girl's hand, went with her quickly down the cart path. Into Jonathan Sherman's kitchen shone long, bright rays from the setting sun, making the shadows still more dusky. As Hannah entered with the little girl a low voice was gently hushing the feverish moaning of a child,

who turned uneasily in a low cradle on one side of the great fireplace.

"I am so glad to see thee, Hannah. I do not know what to do. Dorothy is no better, and Doctor Fuller and his mother started this morning for Boston. Can't thee think of something we can do, Hannah?"

"Let me see, Dorothy," Hannah said, and going to the cradle knelt beside it, and took one of the child's hot little hands in her own cool palm.

"Hast thou any of the drops Doctor Fuller left thee for Hester?" she asked. "I think Dorothy seems a little feverish, but we can soon make her more comfortable," and Hannah lifted the child and held her gently on her lap, while with one hand she turned the pillows in the cradle. . . .

The sun had long since disappeared and now the moonlight streamed into the kitchen. Hester had stoutly refused Mehitable's suggestion that it was past her bedtime, and had curled herself up in a corner of the settle. Mehitable had been to the door several times and looked anxiously in all directions. "I feel anxious about Jonathan," she said at last. "He was going to cut trees in the cedar woods today and it is very late for him, though he told me he might not be at home at nightfall as usual."

Jonathan Sherman's wife died soon after Dorothy's birth, and his sister Mehitable had cared for his house and children since that time. Jonathan had been one of the suitors for Hannah's hand, and at one time her mother thought she favored him. But it was not to be, and Jonathan had taken his dismissal like the large-hearted man he was. . . .

The long night was at last ended. Hester awoke from her uncomfortable sleep upon the bare settle to see her aunt raking the ashes in the fireplace and Hannah kneeling beside the cradle, with one arm thrown over it while she crooned softly a little song that Dorothy loved.

"Where's Father?" demanded Hester at once, for her father's face was usually the first to greet her in the morning. Mehitable turned quickly and holding up a warning

finger, pointed toward the cradle. Hester saw by the distressed face that was turned to her that her aunt was troubled. She went close to her and gently touched her shoulder. "Is anything the matter with Father? Did he not come home all night?" And Hester's voice grew hoarse as she continued her questions.

Mehitable answered her quietly. "No, Hester, thy father did not come home; but we must not be frightened. I will give thee thy bread and milk, and then step over to Abram Small's and ask him to go to the cedar woods and find if anything has happened to him."

Hester took her porringer and sat down on the doorstep while Mehitable went briskly down the road. At Abram Small's she told her fears for her brother's safety, and Abram started at once to get some of the neighbors to go with him in search of Jonathan.

"Thee must not be cast down," he said to Mehitable; "fears are more often worse than reality. The Lord has him in His care in the forest as well as here."

Abram strode forth on his mission of rescuing the unfortunate, for it proved to be that Jonathan had felled several trees and was thinking that he would soon stop work and make his way homeward, when the tree he was cutting gave way suddenly and in falling knocked him down and pinned him to the ground, lying across his legs. He succeeded in partially moving one leg, but the other was held in such a position that he was powerless to move it, and he knew that he was a prisoner for the night. He had not told Mehitable in what direction he should strike into the forest and he knew if a searching party started to find him they must lose some time in seeking his trail. He had blazed the trees, as he came through, and if once they found a trace they could follow and find him.

The long night was chilly, still he did not suffer from cold; he was too distraught with the possibilities of his accident to feel to the utmost his physical discomfort and suffering. He knew by the gradual lighting of the forest around



him that day was dawning, and at last the sunlight made an occasional entrance among the thick branches. His provisions were beyond his reach, but he felt no hunger or even thirst; he was only conscious that the dawn of day had lifted one dreadful fear from him—the fear that some wild beast might attack him in his helpless condition.

Abram and the other neighbors had really lost but little time in finding Jonathan's trail. As they penetrated the forest they called loudly from time to time. At last they were gladdened by a tolerably loud and firm reply, and in a few moments they came upon him. Fortunately they could raise a portion of the tree sufficiently for Jonathan to be drawn from under it, and, although he was too worn and numb to assist himself, they soon improvised a rude litter and carried him toward home. Twice he fainted from exhaustion and the pain of being moved, but by the time they reached his home he had rallied enough to greet the anxious ones there with words of encouragement as to his injuries. He was carried into a bedroom that opened from the kitchen, and Mehitabel bathed the poor bruised limbs. Hannah busied herself in preparing a tempting breakfast which she and Hester carried to the bedroom.

Dorothy, contrary to their fears, awakened feeling much better, and Jonathan thought he had never seen Hannah look more lovable than when she brought the little maid to his bedroom and looked down on him, while Dorothy leaned over and patted "poor father" with her tiny hand.

Dr. Fuller returned from Boston the next day and found that while Jonathan had escaped breaking any bones, the crushed and bruised flesh would require time and treatment to regain its health and strength. The long days crept slowly by. At times Jonathan felt that he could not endure the tediousness of his inactivity, but Abram and others came in daily to cheer him with hopeful words, and best of all, Hannah came often and he fancied there was more interest in the looks her soft eyes gave him now. In sooth, Hannah was more interested in Jonathan than she had ever been, but

quite as far from loving him. Her love for Hester and Dorothy made their father nearer to her than any of her suitors had ever been; and perhaps, in time, she might have married him. In Hannah's time girls had not learned to study and analyze every emotion and impulse, and perhaps they were happier for not thinking too much of their own sensations. At all events, Hannah's staunch character and hopeful disposition would have made happiness for herself and Jonathan possible even had she discovered that such a marriage had been one of sympathy and impulse alone.

Abram Small was devoted to his sick friend, and these weeks might have been doubly hard for Mehitable had not Abram taken all out-of-door work and care from her. She began to look forward to the hearty morning greeting, when Abram stopped at the door for the pails to fill at the spring, which was quite a long way from the house.

During this time, Hester and Abram had become great friends, and she often trotted beside him when he drove the cows to and from the pasture. Mehitable was greatly surprised one evening to see Hester coming home with the cows and leading one by the horn. Hester had shown some fear of cattle until Abram told her that fear of animals did not become a brave girl in a pioneer country, and Hester had overcome the feeling after daily practice in leading old "Brown Betty" to and fro. It was easy to feel fearless beside great strong Abram, whose wide shoulders and strong limbs were well able to protect one against more cruel foes than any they were likely to encounter here. Mehitable understood Hester's bravery; she had very much the same confidence when in Abram's company. It was easy to leave thought and ease to one so kind and strong; and Mehitable blushed, for she knew Abram was finding more than a friendly interest in his daily visits.

One afternoon Hannah had been spending several hours with the brother and sister. She had brought her knitting, and while Mehitable was busied with her spinning wheel, Hannah had worked steadily at her stocking. Jonathan had

been allowed to sit up a while and had thoroughly enjoyed being out in the pleasant kitchen watching the two girls and occasionally joining in their conversation.

"It seems to me, Mehitable, thee hast found a new way of spinning; I never knew thee to set thy wheel directly before that window. Is it lighter there, or is it that thee likes to watch the cart path?" asked Jonathan.

Mehitable blushed but managed to say something about there being more room in that corner, and Jonathan looked laughingly at Hannah, while he replied to Mehitable, "I see, I see."

Mehitable, looking down the road whenever she raised her eyes, at last saw Abram approaching the house. With a natural wilfulness she feigned not to see him, until a shower of wild flowers was tossed in at the window, and Abram's hearty voice said:

"Too busy to see thy friends, Mistress Sherman?"—And a laughing face was bent through the window, and greeted Jonathan and Hannah with friendly nods.

Mehitable gathered up some of the flowers and tossed them back, taking care, however, to retain some, which she tucked in her girdle.

"Jonathan, thou art a new man; we shall soon have thee out again, and I, for one, shall be right glad."

Now, there was nothing certainly to give offense in this friendly little speech, but Mehitable said, with a malicious glance at the speaker, "Indeed, thou must be well tired of coming over here every day, Neighbor Small; happens thou'll not have to come many more times."

"Well, not exactly tired," Abram said, and lowering his voice continued, "I may come every day, just the same; it will depend upon thyself, Mehitable."

At this moment Hester and Dorothy came running up the path, and throwing their arms around Abram begged to be taken to the spring and the pasture.

"Well, little maid, what wilt thou give me if I take thee

to the pasture?" he demanded of Dorothy, whom he lifted to a seat on the window sill.

"I'll kiss thee, Abram," said the small girl, without a moment's hesitation, and planted a resounding kiss upon his tanned cheek.

"Happen thou'll not be so sweet to thy friends when thou art older, Mistress Dorothy," said Abram, as he lifted the child down.

"There be some that will love thee no matter how thee has treated them," he added, with a laughing glance at Mehitable, who tried to frown at such levity before the children, but succeeded only in looking very demure and pretty.

"I must go at once," Hannah said, as Abram turned from the window, followed by the two little girls. "Mother will have already commenced the evening work; I shall be late," and she gathered up her knitting, preparatory to a hasty departure.

"Hannah," Jonathan asked softly, as Mehitable left the room, "when may I speak with thee again? I shall not always be the cripple I am now, or I would not seek thy love."

Hannah looked very troubled. "Oh, Jonathan," she said, "Why need thee ever speak of what I feel can never be? No, no," she added hastily, as Jonathan was about to interrupt her, "I know what thou wouldst say, but I cannot answer thee as thou wouldst have me. If Thomas McClish ever returns he must find me true to him. But it is so hard, this long weary waiting, with only hope to lean on. If I could only know that he is alive, though ever so far away, I could bear the separation."

Hannah's voice trembled, and her lips quivered. Jonathan forbore troubling her with further words. She passed Mehitable with a hasty "good-night," which Mehitable had surely noticed had not her own affairs been so absorbing at the time.

It was with a heavy, discouraged heart that Hannah walked listlessly homeward. "I cannot bear it," she mur-

mured; "how can I live out a long life with this dreadful uncertainty before me?"

She walked on, unconsciously quickening her step. As she reached the lane that led to her home she saw the figure of a man leaning by the gate and peering down the road. He was supporting himself with a cane, and looked thin and worn.

"A stranger," she thought. "Who can it be? Elder Brownlow, from the next circuit?" she continued to herself.

As she came nearer her heart gave a great bound, and then became perfectly quiet. The stranger had dropped his cane and was holding out both arms to her. She caught the look of intense happiness that transfigured the haggard face, while she felt eager hands clasping hers, and the voice she had so wearied to hear said, "I have come back, Hannah!"—And all the trouble and heartbreak were forgotten.

. . . . .

Thomas McClish had been taken from the battlefield by Indians, who discovered that he was not dead but severely wounded. Upon his recovering consciousness, he was about to be bound and burned at the stake when an old squaw, who had lost her only son in the same battle, claimed McClish to take his place. She agreed to adopt him, as was the custom of her tribe, and he was given to her by his captors.

The approaching winter drove the tribe into the Canadian forest, and Thomas McClish was taken with them. These Indians were totally savage, never having adopted any of the customs of the whites, as some of the other tribes had done, and McClish was utterly remote from and deprived of all the necessities and comforts of his former life. He recovered in time from his wounds. He was never allowed to join the Indians in any of their fishing or hunting expeditions, but was kept closely confined near the wigwams, and served the old squaw as her son. He remained here for six years, sometimes overcome with despair as to his future, and sometimes

buoyed with hopes of a return to friends and civilization. His squaw-mother was fond of him, and treated him as kindly as her savage companions permitted. Once every year she went with some of the tribe to Montreal, to sell furs, and each time she brought him, on her return, a handful of salt tied in the corner of her blanket, for she had learned how much more her adopted son relished his food with a bit of seasoning.

The intense cold of the Canadian winters, and the privations to which he was not accustomed, affected McClish, and his health became much impaired from the result of his wounds. At last he lost his eyesight, and thus becoming useless to the old squaw and the tribe, the whites were allowed to redeem him, and he was finally taken to his native place, Philadelphia. Here he entered a hospital, and was fortunate enough to recover his sight; but his wounds, from neglect and unskillful treatment, continued to trouble him. Discharged from the hospital, he quickly made his way to See-konk, for he felt sure that Hannah had remained true to him and that they would yet realize their hopes of happiness.

The long-postponed marriage took place soon after Thomas McClish returned, and a piece of Hannah's wedding gown and her wedding slippers are treasured heirlooms of her family, proud of Hannah's unswerving constancy and the bravery of Thomas McClish, one of the celebrated Rogers' Rangers.

Thomas McClish was afterwards made an ensign in the Revolutionary War, but never entered the service.





# The Haunted Brook





## The Haunted Brook\*

By MRS. CATHERINE R. WILLIAMS

IN the town of North Providence, about half a mile beyond the line that separates it from Providence proper, there is a very pretty valley, watered by a never-failing brook which, murmuring over its pebbly bed, renders this shady recess in many places a most delicious retreat, as all the people who have held the Temperance Pic Nics on its grassy borders can testify.

Before so much of the thick dark wood that adorns its sides was hewn away, there must have been not only a solemn silence but also an air of dread gloom about the neighborhood that was extremely favorable to what the world terms the "superstitious, and lovers of the marvelous." The road that winds through this valley is a very old one, and for many years before the Revolutionary War was the great

\* Williams, *Annals of the Aristocracy*. Providence, 1845.

road through Johnston to Connecticut. Few houses, however, were to be seen on it in those days.

It was at the close of a summer's day, just as twilight was shutting in the scene, that a traveler from Connecticut, returning to his native place, Rhode Island, stopped at the little brook described, to water his horse. The tired and jaded animal he rode, after satisfying his thirst, stopped in the brook as though to rest, while his rider, alive to the rural beauty by which he was surrounded, and soothed by the gentle murmuring of the stream, sat perfectly contented in his seat, luxuriating in the same listless indolence that seemed to influence his beast. The reins hung loosely from his hand, and the feeling that he had now not far to ride probably caused him to be more indulgent to both. The hum of insects and the distant noise of a screech owl were the only noises, except the ripple of the water, that met his ear. How long he had sat thus we cannot say, for he himself—who was the narrator—did not; but suddenly a deep and hollow groan, just above the spot where he was, caused him to start almost off his horse, and the idea that some person had been injured by the falling of a tree, or something of that sort, being uppermost in his mind, he called aloud—

“Who are you? And where are you—that I may come to your help?”

No answer, however, was returned, but again the same deep and dismal groan that seemed almost to rise from beneath his horse's feet, assailed his ears, the horse at the same time starting back, with his ears pricked up, his mane erect, and every symptom of sudden affright. Unable from the increased darkness of the night to distinguish anything at a distance, and fearing some ambuscade with hostile intent, Stephen Thayer, for that was his name, resolved to push on to the next house and alarm the people. This, however, he was unable to do, for nothing would induce the horse to ascend the opposite bank, and he reared and plunged and acted in such a manner—dashing the water from him and

threatening every moment to throw his rider—that Mr. Thayer turned round and retraced the road he had just traveled, until he came back to the next house, which was a small cottage about midway of the plain beyond. Here he alighted and besought the people of the house to go back with a lantern and help him explore the surrounding bushes.

“It’s no use, no use at all,” said the plain old farmer; “you won’t find nothing. I and my boys have heard them same groans every once and a while, time out of mind, and we never could find nothing, and the neighbors call it the Haunted Brook.”

Said the traveler (rather confounded though)—“No ghost could make such a noise as that was, and I am convinced that my horse, who you know can see better in the night than I can, saw somebody, as I found it impossible to get him along forward and had to return.”

“Well,” said the farmer, “if the beast was frightened, that alters the matter; perhaps there is somebody hurt. Boys, get a lantern.”

The lantern was lighted, and attended by three men and a boy Mr. Thayer returned to the spot. But in vain they explored every nook and corner around the brook; nothing was to be seen or heard, and, seeing the traveler safely over, the farmer and his sons returned home.

The story did not fail to be the topic of conversation for many days after in that neighborhood, and even before it died away another fright occurred at the same place, which raised the reputation of the haunted brook still higher.

The owner of the land where this occurred was one Job Angell, a rather young man, though married, with a family. He was among the incredulous; he persisted there was some trick about it, and contrived, as he believed, as a means of disparaging his property, and he vowed that “all the ghosts in God’s creation should not prevent his enjoying his property,” and forthwith prepared for the erection of a house on a little rising ground just in the direction from which the voices had been said to proceed.

The neighbors might very naturally be supposed to be pleased at the acquisition of another house in their vicinity, and particularly near the lonely place, where they could scarce pass after dark without feeling their hair rise. Nevertheless, they generously advised Mr. Angell not to locate his dwelling quite so near the enchanted spot, for, said they, "Who knows but your family might hear these groans in the night, sometime, and get frightened?"

The owner of the land, who himself had never chanced to come past at any time when the voices were heard, or seen any lights (a late improvement which many professed to have witnessed), was completely out of patience at the impertinent interference, as he deemed it, of such advisers, and he set about with all speed to finish his house, and moved into it.

Previous to this, while the house was building, there seemed to be a lulling of the story about the haunted brook; nothing had been seen or heard for some time, and the neighbors began to have misgivings in their minds about the stories.

"I never heard it but once," said one.

"You heard it louder than I," said another.

"I don't think I should have heard it at all," said a third, "if you had not heard it first and told me," and so forth, and so forth. In short, people began to doubt their senses, and the story almost died away. The family of Mr. Angell moved into their new habitation, and everything about the brook wore a new and brighter aspect; the hum of business—the axe of the woodman—the glad shouts of little children, and so forth, had seemed to take the place of the gloom and silence that formerly reigned there. A very short time would now have obliterated from the minds of men the stories of the haunted brook. But amidst all this seeming prosperity there was a source of disquiet within the building that at length became public, and once more aroused the curiosity and excited the terror of the neighbors. The house so newly erected was said to be disturbed; doors opened and shut of themselves, and deep groans were sometimes heard beneath

the floor, as appeared to the family. Even Mr. Angell himself now confessed that he believed the former stories, because he had heard the same, and could in no way account for them!

It seemed that this perplexing noise had visited them even at the social board, and appeared as though just beneath the table, and that on all occasions they had immediately searched the cellars and every apartment in their house without the least elucidation of the mystery, and the consequence was, the family began to feel somewhat uncomfortable.

Mrs. Angell, however, being a very reasonable and courageous woman, protested she would never be afraid there, for if murder had been committed she herself knew nothing about it, and therefore ought not to suffer, and believed she was in no real danger.

Sometimes some weeks would pass by without any disturbance whatever, and then again the noises of some kind would be heard every night. Several nights the family were aroused by lights shining into the window from without, and getting up to see, the lights would suddenly disappear and no trace of them could be found. On one occasion the family of Mr. Angell saw several lights flitting about their yard which, upon opening of the windows, all suddenly and mysteriously disappeared.

There were many incredulous, even in that age of superstition, and among them was a family of the name of Olney, living on what has since been called the Pinckney Farm. This old gentleman protested that "he did not believe a word of it—that he never heard the noises himself, and had often passed there, and he now thought the family deceived, or it was some trick."

One evening during the succeeding winter the old gentleman took his pipe in his mouth and his walking staff, and walked over to pass the evening at "Neighbor Angell's." It was a bright moonlight night, though intensely cold, and snow on the ground; the little brook was frozen over and the landscape bound in icy fetters. Mr. Olney stood a few

moments admiring the pretty situation of the house, and lamenting in his soul the idle rumors that he feared would in time break up the residence of Mr. Angell's family, for whom he began to feel much neighborly regard. At length he knocked at the door and was admitted by Mrs. Angell, who apologized for having the door fastened by saying, "Mr. Angell had gone to town and the remainder of the family was away, and she dared not sit with the door unfastened."

Accepting her apology (for to fasten an outside door in those days in our country was rather an uncommon circumstance in the farming districts), Mr. Olney drew a chair up to the fire and took a seat, entering into a lively chat with the lady of the house. After the conversation seemed to flag, the old gentleman began to rally her upon the report of the haunted house, observing that "there always were noises in a house you could not account for at the moment, but none but could be traced to natural causes."

Mrs. Angell assured him there was no mistake about the noises, but that "It was now some time since they had been afflicted in that way, and she could not help hoping they had ceased altogether."

Mr. Olney smiled. "My good woman," said he, "they never commenced hearing so much before you came here; your imagination was alive to every noise, and everything you heard was magnified to a groan. I wish I could once hear one of those noises you call groans."

A deep and hollow groan, apparently beneath the table where they were sitting, was the response. The lady dropped her knitting work and looked up into his face with mournful earnestness. The old gentleman was fairly paralyzed for an instant, then starting from his chair he exclaimed, "To the cellar!"—and snatching a light from the table, and followed by Mrs. Angell, proceeded to search the premises—not, however, before the terrific noise had been repeated again and again in rapid succession. Nothing in the cellar appeared to give countenance to the supposition it had harbored the character, whoever it might be, and the old



gentleman stubbed back again, when, after looking out at the windows and taking another view of the frozen landscape—just to satisfy himself of the fact that no person was in sight—he once more ensconced himself in the chimney corner, from which he did not remove until Mr. Angell returned from Town.

Never was a sound more cheering than when that person drove up his team into the yard and the well-known voice of his neighbor reached his ears, hawing and geeing his cattle into the dooryard. The young man with him proceeded to put up the animals, while Mr. Angell sought his fireside and hastened to escape from the gripping cold of the night. Mrs. Angell placed before him the warm supper she had kept, and then related the occurrence of the evening, at the end of which her worthy neighbor, old Mr. Olney, shaking the tobacco ashes from his pipe, and then knocking it on the top of the andiron, as if to be sure of not carrying even the dust away, said: "Well, Nancy Angell, I have laughed at your fears, and ridiculed your superstition and weakness as often as I heard of this story, until this night; but I now protest that whether Angel, Devil or Man causes these groans, I would not live in this house for the wealth of the Indies, and I counsel you to leave it before your brain turns, as mine almost has tonight." So saying, the old gentleman departed, and left the family to deliberate upon his advice.

Tradition does not say how often this family continued to be annoyed, or at what time, precisely, the harassed owners resolved to quit the place, but the records of the Town of North Providence show that in the year 17—, it passed into the hands of a Mr. Randall, who became its owner, and the exit of the Angell family was at that time, and was marked by a circumstance so extraordinary that we must allow ourselves to give a full history of it as it was given to us.

We have stated that we were not able to give the exact time that Mr. Angell and family lived at this place, but this

much is certain: according to their own story, they continued to hear strange noises, to see strange lights moving about the grounds, and to be awakened by the opening and shutting of the doors in the night, and the sound sometimes of heavy footsteps pacing the floors.

Now, it must be obvious to everyone, that as they were the owners of the estate, they could not have wanted to do anything that would depreciate its value in the market, and they resolved to sell and quit it forever. And further, if they themselves were conscious of having done anything of a criminal character, that in the judgment of the *superstitious* would occasion such disturbance, they would not court an investigation that might lead to discovery. We can, then, attribute their proclaiming this terrible visitation to but one motive—the wish for sympathy in their affliction, and the irresistible impulse of fear. The latter was, doubtless, the principal cause, as they seem to have been a modest, quiet, retiring family, minding their own concerns and not troubling themselves about their neighbors. The time came, however, when, as they said, they could no longer stand it, and they procured a residence in the Town of Attleborough, in Massachusetts, whither they removed before the new purchaser made his appearance on the premises.

Tradition says the disturbances about the time of the removal were outrageous, and they hurried to get away. The day before they were to commence their journey to their new abode, they took all their furniture, farming utensils, and so forth, out of the house, and packed them in the wagons, ready for a start early on the following morning, and the family accepted an invitation to pass the night at the residence of their good neighbor Job Olney, at what is now called the "Pinckney Place."

We may imagine the mixed feelings with which they turned their backs upon their pleasant, convenient and comfortable dwelling house—the first house the married pair had ever called their own—driven out, as it were, by an unseen hand, by a fatality that seemed to pursue them, to mark them

for a visitation of so strange and mysterious a nature as to completely baffle conjecture as to its cause, and one, that for aught they knew to the contrary, might pursue them wherever they went, not only obliging them to dissipate their substance by removing about, but calculated in no small degree to endanger their reputation. Nevertheless, the world was before them. They had lived, previous to building a house of their own, free from any such trouble, and they could not but hope, by leaving it, to leave this affliction at least.

To the next house was only a short distance—not a quarter of a mile across—and after seeing that everything was left as it ought to be, they took what they believed was a last look, and departed, leaving the loaded wagons in the yard, to be driven over next morning.

In relating this story the narrators carelessly say, “They were plagued to death there and no doubt were glad enough to get away.” But who can tell the pang of leaving *home*, except those who have been compelled by unavoidable circumstances to seek new habitations? Who, but such, know how many fond associations cling about the heart, drawing it back to the spots endeared to us by the presence of departed friends, by the birth of some of our children, by the converse of kind friends and good neighbors, by the childish sports witnessed on its sunny banks and in its pleasant gardens, by the complicated labors of adorning and improving it, *perhaps by having earned it by our own exertions*. For one, we think the feeling next to burying our family.

Yet we may suppose that when convened around the social board of their good neighbor, with all their little family alive and well around them and talking over the probable pleasures of their next residence—the novelty of which always pleases children—and hearing the protestations of their friends of “how often they should come to see them” (promises most generally forgotten almost as soon as made), there was a degree of tranquillity restored, if not of happiness.

Mr. Angell, however, had somewhat of a home feeling about him and, after supper, it being a clear, starlight evening, his feelings led him to seek a little eminence just back of the house that commanded a full view of his late habitation, and that not many rods distant, either. Accordingly, saying *nothing to nobody*, as the Irishmen have it, he took his hat, and very slyly stole off alone to take an evening view and one more look at his deserted home, and to meditate, as he said, upon the strange and unnatural events that had compelled him to leave it. Upon gaining the top of this little hill he raised his eyes, and full before him stood his late house completely enveloped in flames, which rose high above the roof; and through every window poured a flood of light.

Horrorstruck, he surveyed it but an instant for, recollecting his goods were in the utmost danger, he hastened back to call the family to his aid. The alarm was soon given, and every man, woman and child on their feet, to help rescue the goods. Exclamations of terror and surprise escaped many of them upon coming in sight of the burning building. But on they went in breathless haste, descending into a hollow, where they lost sight of the building for a few moments, and then ascending the rising ground upon which, at the distance of a few rods, the house stands. This they climbed in breathless haste, and full before them stood the gloomy mansion in silence and darkness, with not a ray of light to be seen about it, inside or out!

It may well be imagined they were in much amazement, and could scarce believe the evidence of their senses. Such was the fact, and after a thorough examination of the premises, they were compelled to believe it an optical delusion.

Of this family we know no more than that they departed next morning, to the regret of the few neighbors who lived in that vicinity, and that another, of a very different stamp, succeeded them—people who laughed immoderately at the idea of a haunted house, and who wanted “to have a speedy

sight of the Ghost, if there was any"—and that they continued there but a short time, and another, and another succeeded them, the old story of the groans, and so forth, occasionally breezing up; stories confirmed by laborers, servants and visitors, in many instances.

Our readers are not to suppose that these things took place every day. No, indeed; sometimes months would elapse before anything unpleasant took place, and one time—it was averred to be a whole year—nothing that could not be accounted for was heard. At last it got so notorious that people were absolutely loath to reside in the building.

At this time (we dare not designate the precise era) there was a man then residing in Providence who offered himself as a tenant of the house, and the owner, wondering some at his temerity, very gladly accepted, the man very vehemently protesting that there never was any such thing as supernatural appearances; that it was contrary to reason, and that he had no fear whatever. This person was a wily sort of creature. He was one of those mysterious beings that live nobody knows how—did but little business, and was always busy; knew everybody's business; wanted to advise everybody and help everybody; sly as a weasel, and had a habit of putting his tongue in his cheek whenever he thought he said anything remarkably cunning, or was intent upon any particular piece of mischief. All sorts of reports about murders and treasures and so forth, near the Haunted Brook, had reached his ears, and something told him that probably money might be made out of it—*that* was the great end and aim of his life, and Peter Wiggins, as we shall call him (the other names are all real ones, this only anonymous, for obvious reasons), was determined to try the experiment. Accordingly he hired the house, and forthwith proceeded to ensconce himself there.

It was not long before Peter shared the same fate with the other occupants. The owner, in despair, requested him to remain and "set his own price for rent." Peter consented, because he had determined on the thing beforehand.

So the groaning, and slamming doors, and lights, and so forth and so forth, went on, as was said, without any remedy, until at length Peter said he had a prospect of going into some business and must leave; but he gave it as his opinion the noises would not hurt anybody, and said it was not on that score that he removed. The owner, finding that Peter was the only one who ever had the courage to despise such an annoyance, was very loath to spare him; but there was no help, and he removed.

After this several persons tenanted the house, and one thought he heard a groan once or twice; another one saw a light he could not account for, and a third heard persons walking the floor. But the truth was, the story began to go down, and after a time quite died away. Mr. Abbott, a tanner and currier, bought the place in 1791. In 1806 he deeded it to Oliver Ingals, his son-in-law, who the same day deeded it to Rufus Waterman of Providence. He lived there thirty years, and his family heard nothing or, if they did, having fourteen in family, they accounted for all sorts of noises.

This residence completed the downfall of the ghost stories, and nothing of the Haunted Brook, or house, has since been heard. The place is now the property of Mr. William Chace, a man who is not likely to be visited for murders, for he does not approve of even *judicial ones*, and we presume it will never be troubled again. We must not, however, lose sight of Peter, who, you will be surprised, reader, is the real hero of our story.

Peter Wiggins went into trade in one of our seaports in Rhode Island, upon the countenance of what is called a sleeping partner. That is, his friend who found the cash was not a visible assistant in the business, nor, indeed, was his name known. All that was known was that he appeared to have an inexhaustible fund of wealth. Upon this Peter traded, and though he met with some losses which would have staggered many a man in good business, it seemed to make no difference to him; wealth flowed in upon him so fast



that it seemed more like witchcraft than any other craft, and although he had a very extravagant family, in a very few years he was known to be immensely rich. It does not appear that any suspicion existed at the time as to the manner in which this property was obtained, although every one thought it wonderful he should acquire so much in so short a time. With the possession of wealth came its almost inseparable concomitant, the lust of power, and Peter became one of the most overbearing, tyrannical, and ferocious despots ever known. The humble, almost suppliant, carriage assumed before this era was entirely laid aside, and a stern, inflexible, domineering manner substituted—more offensive because the accession to the ranks of fashion was of recent origin. The females of the family partook more or less of this spirit—but what cannot money do? Wealth continued to flow in, and the world continued to follow it. At the present day the descendants of that family, and *not very remote, either*, continue to flourish in the great world, and to dictate to all whom the hard fate of poverty and dependence have subjected to their control. Upon the strength of old Wiggins' money they assume a degree of self-importance, ridiculous in any one, contemptible in them.

It is in vain to boast of *my father*, or *grandfather*, being one of the first merchants in such a town, and that "our property came by commerce." *It is not so*, and we have reason to believe—but stop, let us not anticipate or even seem to judge our neighbor, but simply tell the story and let every one form his own conclusions.

Peter Wiggins, as we before stated, was a poor man when he went to reside by the Haunted Brook. He lived there but a short time, and although the excitement about the noises, and so forth, was endeavored to be kept up, yet it was found to be impossible after he went from there, and very soon the stories died away with the causes that produced them, doubtless.

Among the few intimates in the family of Peter was a widow lady of very genteel manners and winning address—a



woman who had once been very handsome, and still retained much of her beauty. To her, it was often remarked, Peter, savage as he was, was always particularly polite. In fact, the widow, who was a little coquettish in her manners, had the faculty of attracting the regards and insinuating herself into the confidence of people in a remarkable manner, and she continued intimate in the family of Peter to the day of his death.

This woman had watched the movements of Peter with a keen eye. She divined that there was a secret somewhere worth penetrating, and she resolved never to give up the chase until she had somehow wormed it out of Peter. She soon discovered that he alone of all the family was the possessor of this secret, that there did not exist sufficient confidence between him and his wife to warrant the supposition that she was a sharer in it, and his children were still less likely to be informed on the subject.

These remarks she was years in making, but her curiosity was restless as ever. She had watched and been disappointed long, but a woman resolved rarely gives up the chase until her point is accomplished. She had often stayed weeks at a time in the family, had access to every drawer and trunk in the house, helped them ransack old papers and letters, and enjoyed their confidence unlimited, almost; but the secret—the courted secret—was as far off as ever.

Chance favored her at length. She had been sent for one evening in a great hurry. Her dear friend Mrs. Wiggins had been taken very ill and “wished to see her immediately.” She lost no time in obeying the summons, and her skill—for she really had a great deal—immediately detected the disease to be nothing more than the colic, which she proposed to cure without the aid of a physician. It was some hours, however, before the patient was relieved, and then she sank into a sound sleep.

The widow proposed to watch with Mr. Wiggins, who had declared his determination of sitting up with his wife. It was a rather raw and chilly night, and a large wood fire

burned in the sitting room, communicating with the lodging room of Mrs. Wiggins. To this fire the couple retreated, knowing they could hear the slightest noise should the patient awake and need their services. Peter complimented the lady much upon her skill in nursing, and the feeling that she had saved him a doctor's bill doubtless put him in a very good humor.

If there is ever a time when people are inclined to open their hearts and converse confidentially, it is in the chimney corner of a stormy night. Peter was a very temperate man, though he had on this night strained a point and made a bowl of hot punch, the merits of which he and the widow had been discussing, when a low moaning sound, somewhat resembling a groan, occasioned by the wind in the chimney, gave her an opportunity to discuss a subject very near to her heart, and she began:

"Well, I declare, Mr. Wiggins, if that don't remind me of that dismal old house where you once lived, beside the Haunted Brook! I protest it must have sounded something like the groans heard there."

Peter was silent; the widow went on: "For my part, I never heard them, though I visited you so often then. But I cannot doubt so many evidences."

Peter sat uneasy in his chair. The widow continued: "But the subject is so chilling I think I will just take a little more of this punch—besides it will not be so good after it is cold."

"Do so, do so," said Peter with pressing hospitality, and the lady poured out a tumblerful, saying, "Here, you must pledge me, and we will drink to the speedy recovery of our patient."

Peter turned off the additional tumbler of hot punch, ashamed of being outdone by a woman, while his tempter, standing behind his chair, touched hers to her lips and slyly emptied the remainder into the pitcher again.

The widow soon saw that this was her time, and resolved

to press the siege. So, drawing her chair still closer to the fire, she recommenced the discourse.

"Well, I do think, Mr. Wiggins, you did a great deal of good in that old house; you fairly laid the ghost. 'Pon my word, you raised the value of that property fifty per cent; and besides, you deserve to be crowned for not being frightened. But the innocent," she added, "have nothing to fear. However, I should like to know how you managed to stop all that."

Still Peter was silent. She resolved to alter her mode of attack. So, laying one hand on Peter's knee, she looked up imploringly into his face, saying, "Now, dear Mr. Wiggins, do just tell me! I never will lisp it to any one—I give you my word. Did you ever hear anything in that house that you could not account for?"

"No," said Peter.

"Well, but you have seen or heard something. Now, do tell me; I will never tell, depend upon it. I know it is unpleasant to talk about such things; but I will say nothing, you know."

"Women are easily frightened," said Peter, "and I never even told my wife,"—growing more and more confused, and not aware he had admitted there was a secret.

"You were very prudent, Mr. Wiggins, as you always are, and so careful of her feelings. But a little thing agitates her; I can bear anything."

"I don't know," returned Peter; "it was no small thing, I can tell you, and might have frightened anybody."

After a few more wheedling compliments to Peter's courage and presence of mind, and commending him highly for his prudence in not before disclosing it, and so forth, the widow succeeded, upon a promise of secrecy, in drawing from Peter the following narration. Said Peter:

"It so chanced that I never heard the groans told of so often, but persons upon whom I could rely had, and I was determined never to tell my wife and family that I believed anything about it, but uniformly pretended that I did not

believe in anything of the kind. However, I felt there was something wrong there, and I resolved to watch. So one night, after getting the whole house to bed, I sat up alone until midnight, expecting to hear the noises; but no noises came, and being sleepy I raked up the fire and prepared to go to bed, when, just as I turned round, there stood a man at the far side of the room looking hard at me. Says I, 'For God's sake, what do you want of me, stranger? Can I serve you in any way?'

"The man walked straight toward the front door, beckoning me to follow. I did, though I confess to you I felt my hair stand up stiff on my head. Well, he opened the door, and pointing down to the step said, '*Look there!*' and disappeared."

"And did you look?" said the widow, with breathless impatience.

"To be sure I did," said Peter. "I had a confidential workman, and to him I confided the mystery, and by agreement we both sat up next night, and when the house was all asleep went with our crowbars and shovels and removed the steps. The cause of the disturbance we discovered and removed that night, and take my word for it, the house was never disturbed again."

"And what did you find?" said the widow.

"That," said Peter firmly, "I shall never tell. My man kept the secret while he lived; now I mean to—it can do no good. And I am thinking Mrs. R——, as my wife sleeps so well, I might as well go to bed. It is a pity for both of us to be robbed of our rest; so good-night," and Peter sallied out of the room, leaving the widow more perplexed than ever to know what was *under the door stone!* That part, however, she never found out. Peter was so firm she feared to press the point farther, and there the matter rested, although the widow felt quite sure it must be gold, for, added to all the stories, one of ancient times was, that gold had been buried somewhere in that region by pirates. How this

story originated we are unable to say, but we rather think it preceded the terrors of the Haunted Brook.

We have said that the family of Mr. Abbot, who lived there thirty years, experienced no inconvenience from nocturnal visitors, and it is now full twenty-five years since their removal. Consequently, this circumstance of the ghost related by Peter, and retold by the very widow to ourself more than thirty years since, must have transpired more than fifty-five years ago.

A very singular affair took place while Mr. Abbot's family owned the house. It was found necessary to repair the steps, and some one made the remark, after they were up, "There used to be dreadful stories about noises, and gold buried in this region; suppose we search now!"

Said one of the men employed, "I will see," and plunging his iron crowbar into the ground, it slipped from his hand and was out of sight in a moment.

The work people stared at each other in astonishment; however they went to work in good earnest to dig for the crowbar, the head of which they found about two feet below the soil. They dug to the bottom of the bar; the ground appeared loose, and from it they took out a quantity of bones, much decayed, but among them were the marks of *former good cheer*, for bones of poultry in abundance, still distinguishable, were taken out, as also of different animals. The noise of that discovery drew immense crowds to the house to examine the bones. Among the visitors were several physicians. One of them took away a large bone which he believed came from a child's arm. Others thought it the bone of some animal, as doubtless it was. The whole thing was accounted for by some of the wiser ones saying, "They must have been carried there by rats."

There is, however, another and more rational way of accounting for these bones, as well as for the noises that in early times so much annoyed the tenants—for the fact of these noises is as well authenticated as the existence of the house itself. There must, in our opinion, have been a deposit

for stolen property somewhere in the neighborhood. The sudden prosperity of Peter Wiggins, his shrewdness, and total absence of fear respecting these disturbances; the bones (the improbable conjecture about the rats to the contrary notwithstanding) were in our opinion the remains of nocturnal feasts, probably held in this very house during the frequent seasons it stood empty; and the poultry might have been conveyed there, or stolen from the neighboring farmyards. Whenever they heard anyone approaching, it was easy to extinguish the lights. No doubt in our mind, they had the hardihood to hold a carouse the night poor Mr. Angell and his family took leave of the premises, and as soon as it was discovered, by concert and through previous arrangement, every light disappeared as soon as people approached. It would be easy for the men, seeing the lights shining through the foliage, to be deceived and suppose the roof on fire.

The noises at the brook were undoubtedly contrived by the thieves or counterfeitters, whichever they were, on purpose to frighten people from the spot, and have free ingress and egress to their place of deposit. That they had powerful means of carrying on their deceptions, we cannot doubt—for never has a nest of this description been discovered without finding that the originators, if not the whole company, were men of property, and of some *respectability*, as the phrase goes.

At least two nests of counterfeitters have been ferreted out in our state within the last century, and there was not a *poor man* among the number. They were people, mostly, who figured in what is termed the upper classes in society, and who could have had no apology for their conduct but the haste to be rich. This is uncontrovertible, and we defy anyone to disprove it. They escaped infamous punishment by money and the influence of *great friends*, and many of their descendants are among the nobility of the state, and lording it over poor Rhode Island with a rod of iron, ad-



mitted to rights and privileges from which *better men* are shut out.

As to our old acquaintance, Peter Wiggins, there is no doubt in our minds that his sagacity compelled the company to make terms with him—his temptation in that case must have been very great, a fortune for just holding his tongue; and his story about the man in the room was most likely true, that in case the property was discovered even in his possession, he might account for it by *supernatural means*. The theory of ghosts, if at all credited, does not represent them eating and drinking, nor would we believe them commissioned to play such fantastic tricks as those employed to terrify the Angells and other inhabitants of that house. The groans and noises might easily have been under the window, instead of the floor, and superstition and terror would do the rest.

It is a common saying, "The receiver is as bad as the thief," and we have but little to say respecting the morality of the transaction. But with respect to the other proverb, "Ill got, ill goes," we must say that so far, the family of Peter have managed to keep their property, and few feel the importance property gives them more than they do, or have more to say about vulgar, low-bred people. It is highly probable the younger part of this family are profoundly ignorant of the manner in which Peter acquired his wealth. As a general thing, we presume, they are ignorant that Peter ever lived in the *haunted house*, for be it remembered he did not tell them the tale he told the widow—but said to her, "he had never communicated it, even to his wife, as it would answer no purpose, but to make them timid." In telling the story about the ghost he must have known he was practising a deception, and that is sufficient evidence all was not right on his side. That Peter had a hand in secreting the property, still less in stealing it, we do not believe. We merely suppose that the thieves, finding themselves in great danger of exposure through the sagacity of Peter, from whom they must have been convinced they could not conceal things much



longer, made friends with him, and gave him a large share of the spoils—or he became their salesman.

To those who are inclined to discredit the story of Peter, we would say that they have only to call to mind a similar transaction that took place in Providence many years ago. The case was this: a number of most mysterious thefts had been committed, by nobody knew whom. From a number of dry goods stores valuable articles continued to be abstracted, as though by magic. The merchants would lock up their shops safe overnight, and find them apparently safe in the morning; but in the course of the next day some of the most valuable goods were found missing. This occurred in so many places that suspicion, at first directed against some of the clerks, was completely put to rest in that quarter, and they became convinced that there must be a company of thieves in the place, from day to day and week to week. These depredations continued to increase, and bolder and bolder grew the robbers. Many believed they must be foreigners, and much lamentation was made by such that they continued to pour into the country. All the stories of robberies in older countries were cited to prove that the accomplishment could only have been learned in such perfection on the other side of the water, and no one supposed that any of our own simple and innocent citizens could by any means have been concerned in it. Matters went on some time in that way, until all at once there began to be strange rumors afloat about a certain neighborhood, west side, being haunted. Strange noises had been heard underground; several nervous spinsters had heard nails driven into coffins in the dead of night; others had heard gravel shoveled on to them; the panic spread, and several married ladies heard the same, while their stupid partners were snoozing by their sides; when their husbands upon being awakened cursed them for indulging such ridiculous whims, and went to sleep again. Afterwards, some of the ladies saw strange lights dodging about, in the dead of the night, of course. This also was treated with the most sovereign contempt. It was quite

remarkable that none but women heard or saw any of these things.

The neighborhood where this report arose contained no foreigners, only old-fashioned, businesslike, plodding people. It was what is called a good neighborhood—that is, all the people were at least good liver, most of them the upper classes of society. Here and there was a store of goods which, in those days, consisted of a heterogeneous mixture of dry and West India goods, fancy articles and country produce. A clerk, in those days, was often called to measure off a quart of molasses and half a dozen yards of calico (then the pattern for a lady's dress) in the same breath, and to bag a bushel of salt and sort ladies' gloves, to weigh a pound of candles and display silks and laces—custom had not then introduced order into the science of shopkeeping.

We have but little recollection ourselves of any of the inhabitants of that neighborhood, save being once or twice in a chaise when our household was supplied with some articles from one of these shops, and we were then so small as to be wedged up close on one side the carriage, to prevent our little selves from tumbling out. And memory on those occasions first brings to mind that never-to-be-forgotten friend, a mother, and how she would tie a shawl round our neck to guard us from the cold—and from time to time feel our little hands and feet, to see how we stood the weather, and when weary and drowsy, put us under her black satin cardinal, and hold her muff before our face, that the cold wind might not visit us too roughly, until we forgot all our troubles and were only awakened at our own door by old faithful black Freelove, a mixture of African blood with the Narragansett tribe of Indians, who would bear us carefully to bed, and then take her couch by our side.

But one thing more we recollect. We remember a dashing chaise, with a plaited harness, that once or twice stopped at our farm on the way to Connecticut, with a very self-important, burly looking man and a pale, delicate woman, who had the pensive air that invariably marks a female wretched

in marriage. We also recollect a little boy, of singular beauty, who used to accompany them. He was one of those bright, intelligent and ethereal-looking children, that appear not made for this state of being but rather to have dropped from some celestial hemisphere where sin and sorrow never enter. Strange, that though he was the first child we have any recollection of, his infant beauty should have been so deeply imprinted on our memory.

These people, we were told, kept the store where we had sometimes stopped for the articles above-mentioned. And we recollect, too, hearing sometime after, of the death of the little boy and the inconsolable grief of his wretched mother, and how dark it appeared to us that such a dear, good little child should be taken from the world and buried up in the cold ground, although, our own mother told us, "He was doubtless taken from the evil to come, and his little soul was now among the Angels." But if our childish sensibilities were aroused by this first affecting view of death, how much more were we shocked and appalled, some time after, by hearing that the terrible robberies that had for some time past kept the neighboring town in alarm had all been traced—the monster of iniquity ferreted out—and the robber was no less a person than the dashing traveler who drove the handsomest chaise and had the pensive wife, and was father to the beautiful boy; and that a whole family were involved in misery and disgrace on his account. It was the first time we had a glimpse of the far-seeing wisdom that governs the universe and that had so opportunely removed the child, whose very countenance bespoke a delicacy of feeling and sensibility to disgrace that, in after life, under certain circumstances, might have been overwhelming, and rendered him an idiot or a madman.

The manner in which the discovery of this man's guilt was made may easily be imagined. The ghost rumors were not permitted to die away by the ladies, who, nettled at the ridicule of their legal masters, were determined that they themselves should hear the noises, and to this end compelled some

of them to sit up until "the ghosts or Satan began their pranks again—shoveling gravel and driving nails into coffins." The result was, the men were convinced and, discerning some mischief, laid their heads together and resolved to watch the neighborhood privately. They discovered one night a man with a dark lanthorn, passing into their neighbor's small house and, subsequently, rays of light, through crevices in a cellar window. Communing with some of the persons robbed—they procured a warrant, and searched the premises, particularly the cellar, where they were nearly baffled, until some one thought of sounding the boards that lined the walls. In one place they gave a hollow sound and, upon removing them, a recess appeared, loaded with the spoils of many years. Beneath the floor, keys of every description were found, and very opportunely, too, as appeared. They would soon have been removed to a distant place, where business would have been commenced upon a grand scale.

Many, many years after, we saw the pale face of that deluded, miserable man through the bars of a prison, where he served a term of years, until bank robbing and wholesale swindling became such a fashionable accomplishment that we presume the Government took him out for very shame. At all events, he was permitted to spend his last days at a secluded place in the country, where he ended his life, and we hope his miseries, together.

NOTE.—In reference to the story of the Haunted Brook, we would observe that the widow of Stephen Abbot, a very intelligent old lady now living in this city, corroborates our story as far as she was acquainted with it. She moved to the Haunted Brook fifty-five years ago, and says various persons then visited her for the charitable purpose of telling her *she could not live there*. One family who had tenanted it, and was driven away by the disturbances some years before, she described as here mentioned. She states that one man who became suddenly rich after living there, was supposed to have removed the treasure, and that she was the person who suggested searching under the steps, when the workman lost his crowbar, and that she believed the bones found there were the bones of animals.

Now, the probability certainly is, that Peter Wiggins, after the removal of the treasure had this place filled in haste; hence the loose earth which yielded to the crowbar. A few years since, there was a

## THE HAUNTED BROOK

proposal to bring water from the Haunted Brook in an aqueduct to Smith's Hill, from which it is distant not much over a mile—but the expense being found too great, it was abandoned. It is not improbable that there are still caverns in the neighborhood of that river, as the earth in many places gives a hollow sound. In the deep recesses of the wood is a most romantic spot, where the Temperance Pic Nics and others are sometimes held, and they have christened it "Happy Valley."



# **The Gould Island Mystery**







*House occupied by Gen. Prescott  
when he was captured*

## The Gould Island Mystery\*

By DAVID BUFFUM

THAT part of the Island of Rhode Island called Ferry Neck, the spot where the first settlers built their houses and incorporated their "body politic," is a level peninsula near the north end of the island, comprising some three hundred acres and extending nearly to the mainland. Though comparatively destitute of trees, the location is beautiful. To the north is Mount Hope and the Cove; to the south, you look down Narragansett Bay, past picturesque little Gould Island with its cliffs and thick pine woods, between the green and fertile shores of Rhode Island on the one hand and the wooded hills of Tiverton on the other, straight out to sea.

Time has pretty effectually obliterated all traces of the houses of the settlers. Close to the south shore, however, can still be seen the remains of the foundation of a house built of small yellow brick, which would seem to indicate that the house that stood there was either of later date or better construction than the others. It was, in fact, both.

\* *New England Magazine*, September, 1891.

It was standing and occupied long after the others had passed away; and connected with it is a story, the outlines of which can be found in the old records of the Society of Friends in Rhode Island, and which is an illustration of the strange springs which govern our human nature.

This house was built and for many years occupied by Isaiah Scott, a wealthy man for his times, who to the dignity of an elder in the Friends' meeting added the "claims of long descent." I should like to describe the house as gambrel-roofed and large, with dormer windows and a handsome railing around the top—and such a house would be suggested by the stately owner, who always rode a blooded horse and wore the finest of broadcloth. But I am sorry to say it was nothing of the kind. Though of a better build and larger size than its neighbors, it was still by no means large; it had a barn roof, and was of quite commonplace appearance. Those who were privileged to enter the house, however, noticed that the plain furniture was solid and expensive; that Friend Scott's wife and daughter wore the finest and daintiest of Quaker costumes; that the well-supplied table was waited on by a smart negro boy; in fact, that the owner, though he prided himself on his plainness and sobriety, had all of the comforts and most of the luxuries attainable at that time and place.

The time at which our story begins, antedates the Revolution some ten or twelve years. It is an afternoon in October, and Dorothy, Isaiah Scott's only daughter, stands on the front doorstep of the house and looks earnestly toward the Tiverton shore. As she stands thus, let us take her portrait. Her figure is slight, but graceful; her features are small, but regular and pretty; the dark eyes are perhaps a trifle too near together; there is a straight nose, a short upper lip, a beautifully moulded chin. Her light brown hair is partially covered by a dainty lace cap. Her dress, of course, is drab, and she wears no jewelry except the plain gold pin which holds in place her white muslin neckerchief.

As she gazes, a rowboat puts out from the Tiverton shore,

and driven by strong and swift strokes, rapidly approaches the island. Dorothy goes in and gets her "work," and seats herself on the doorstep to await its arrival. It is less than a mile to Tiverton, and the boat keel is soon grating on the shore in front of the house. A handsome, well-built young fellow, fashionably dressed, jumps out, secures the boat, and runs up the bank to the house, where Dorothy cordially greets him. There is no mistaking his errand; we see at once that he comes a-wooing, and also that Dorothy is thoroughly mistress of the situation. Can it be that she is a flirt—this sweet, demure Quaker maiden?

Presently the door opens, and Isaiah Scott steps out. With stately courtesy he shakes hands with the young man, and says, "How does thee do, John Brownell?" He does not add, "I am glad to see thee," for he is not. John Brownell is well aware of this; but although in general an exceedingly well-bred fellow, he is now in that state of mind in which he does not hesitate to go where he is not wanted—he is in love.

As the three talk, a dapper little fellow, clad in complete Quaker costume and walking briskly, comes round the corner of the house and joins them. He is kindly greeted by Isaiah, who does say in this case, "I am glad to see thee, Joseph Smith," and Dorothy, giving him her hand and a smile that amply rewards him for his six-mile walk, moves along the step and makes room for him at her side—a favor she did not accord to John Brownell. He looks happy, but John Brownell is not jealous; he does not fear this rival.

Suddenly on the still October air comes the sharp ringing of a horse's hoofs on the hard bridle path that skirts the beach, and they see a horseman on a powerful chestnut horse approaching the house at an easy canter. Like John Brownell, he is dressed in the best of fashion of the period, and rides as only they ride who have been accustomed to the saddle from childhood.

"There comes Peter Burton," said Dorothy quietly; and the expression on Isaiah Scott's face, as he notices the faint

flush on her cheek, is not a pleasant one. Can this be another wooer? Unquestionably it is—and the one regarded by Isaiah as the most dangerous of all. True, though a good-looking enough fellow, he had neither the good looks, the ease of manner, nor the polish of John Brownell, nor the spotless reputation of Joseph Smith; and, though his estate was sufficient for the wants of those times, he was poorer than either, which was sufficient to condemn him in Isaiah's eyes. Isaiah knew that maidens did not always choose with reference to these points; and though Dorothy was really no more in love with him than with her other admirers, she was certainly much more interested in him, which was a bad sign.

Like John Brownell, Peter would take no hints from Isaiah; any coldness or lack of welcome was lost on him. Isaiah had often wished he might tell him plainly to discontinue his visits. A true gentleman, however, he felt that he could not do this as long as he knew nothing definite against his character or social standing; but recently he had heard things which he thought warranted him in taking this step, and it gave him a feeling of relief to think that he would soon be rid of one annoyance, and that this would probably be Peter Burton's last visit.

There was a row of hitching posts and a horse block in front of the house; but Peter, who was careful of his horse, rode straight to the stable and gave the animal into the charge of black Pascal. Peter, who always tipped him handsomely, and often lingered in the stable for a little talk about the horses, was great friends with Pascal; and on this occasion the latter remarked, with a tone of genuine regret in his voice:

"I've got bad news for yer, Mars' Burton: I'm afeard this is yer las' visit to this place. Mars' Brownell, he play a mean trick on yer."

Peter grew pale. "What is it?" he asked.

"Well, las' evenin' I overheard Mars' Brownell tellin'

massa 'bout yer bettin' an' racin' hosses long with Tom Briggs las' Sunday——"

"The devil he did!"

"Yes, Mars' Burton; an' he said how ye'd overdrew yer 'count, an' it took yer three weeks ter make it right."

"The infernal li——," began Peter, and then checked himself, knowing that the story was true, and knowing also that in the eyes of Isaiah Scott his faults would not be condoned.

"It's just my luck, Pascal," he said, "and probably this is my last visit. You needn't put up my horse—I'll be back," and he walked toward the house.

His face was very pale as he joined the group at the door. No one said much by way of greeting, but all shook hands with him, except John Brownell, who offered his hand, but was refused.

"No, I will not shake hands with you," said Peter hotly. "You have proved yourself to be no gentleman. Without any cause or any provocation, you have been maligning me and blackening my character to Mr. Scott."

John started at this sudden explosion, but Isaiah replied with a quiet rebuke in his manner:

"It would have been in better taste, Peter, to introduce this subject at some other time. As thee has introduced it, however, let me say that thy charges are wrong. John did not volunteer his information, but I asked him some questions about thee—and questions which, as thee has been a frequent guest at my house, I had a right to ask; and he simply told me what he knew."

"Very kind in him!" retorted Peter with a sneer. "Black sheep as you choose to think me, I would not have stooped to such dirty work."

Isaiah laid his hand on the young man's shoulder. "Peter," said he, "I am sorry to hear thee use such language. Understand that I do not consider thee a black sheep. I know thee has many excellent traits. But in betting and racing horses, in disregard of the Sabbath, and in thy carelessness in money matters, thee has shown a recklessness and lack of

principle which argue poorly for thy future. And therefore, while I would have preferred to speak to thee privately, let me say for myself and my wife that thy visits here do not give us pleasure, and we ask thee to discontinue them."

Anger, mortification, and sorrow struggled in the young man's mind. His eyes filled with tears as he looked at Dorothy. So here was an end of it all. "Farewell, Dorothy," he said, "I have loved thee very dearly."

Dorothy rose and, giving him her hand, said sweetly, "Farewell, Peter; I cannot tell thee how sorry I am for all that has happened. I shall miss thee much." But she was very calm. For an instant, but only an instant, the thought flashed through his mind, "Does she, after all, really care anything for me?"

He bade farewell to Isaiah curtly; then, stepping close to Brownell, he said in a low voice, with flashing eyes and through his set teeth: "for the part that you have had in this business I shall call you to account."

"As you like," answered Brownell in the same tone.

All overheard them, and as Peter disappeared around the house Isaiah said: "I trust, John, thee is too much of a man to pay any attention to his threat. It often shows more courage and a higher sense of honor to refuse a challenge than to accept one." To which John, anxious to keep Isaiah's good opinion, answered, "Of course."

He was less anxious on that score, however, when he pushed off his boat that evening, for when he rose to depart Isaiah accompanied him to the water's edge and said: "This has been a hard afternoon for me, John. It was a painful thing to have to speak to Peter as I did; but I may now speak out all that is on my mind, and I have a few words for thee. It is but right for thee to know that, while I believe thy character to be excellent, there is no better chance for thee than for Peter, so far as Dorothy is concerned. Even if she returned thy feelings—which she does not—it is out of the question for her to wed a man of thy estate; and it is better



for thee to understand this thing from the beginning, and delude thyself with no false hopes."

John Brownell had despised himself when he gave the information against Peter. Now that he saw that no advantage to himself could result from it, he despised himself more.

## II.

Dorothy was up betimes the next morning, looking as fresh and sweet as if nothing had made a ripple on the placid waters of her life. Evidently the unpleasant events of the previous day had not disturbed her night's rest. Why should they? True, she had lost a lover, and one who had interested her more than any other of her admirers, and she felt rather sorry; but doubtless it was all for the best—and she had never lacked for lovers. Still, she did not eat her breakfast with quite her usual appetite, and she spent much of the forenoon in gazing from her chamber windows over the shining waters of the bay. She knew no meeting could take place between the two young men without one or the other crossing the bay; and knowing them both much better than her father did, she had no doubt that Peter would carry out his threat, and she put little faith in John's meek "Of course." The forenoon wore away, however, without any boat putting out from either shore. After the noon meal she resumed her vigil, feeling more hopeful, as the afternoon passed, that the quarrel might blow over. As the sun began to sink behind the western hills she was turning away from her window with a sigh of relief, when she saw a boat put out from Tiverton, which she instantly recognized as John Brownell's, and almost simultaneously from the Rhode Island shore another, which she knew was Peter Burton's. No other vessel was in sight, except a small boat far to the south, apparently containing two men and just disappearing behind Gould Island.

Dorothy's heart gave a bound of fear and excitement as

she saw the two boats move swiftly toward Gould Island, a place where more than one dispute had been settled by sword or pistol. But this feeling was quickly replaced by astonishment when, as they drew nearer, she saw only one man in each boat. What did it mean? If a duel was to be fought, where were the seconds? With breathless interest she watched John Brownell, who reached Gould Island first, draw his boat up on the beach, climb the rugged cliff above it, and disappear in the woods. Peter reached it a few minutes later and, drawing up his boat alongside John's, took the same path up the cliff and into the woods.

Several minutes passed, and it was rapidly growing darker, but Dorothy kept her straining gaze riveted on the island. Presently from the spot where the two men entered the woods, she saw one of them come out. He descended the cliff hurriedly, pushed off his boat, and in the fast-gathering gloom she could just discover that he headed for the Rhode Island side; then the darkness shut out the view, and heartsick she went down to the dining room, where her parents were already seated at the tea table. She said nothing of what she had just seen; it would be of no use now, she reasoned, and they would blame her for not telling them of her apprehensions in the morning.

That night, for perhaps the first time in Dorothy's life, her sleep was broken, and the first glimmer of dawn found her again gazing toward Gould Island. John Brownell's boat still lay where she saw him draw it up!

Dressing quickly, she ran downstairs, feeling that she *must* get some news as to what had passed on the island. She got it sooner than she had expected. In the dining room was her father, booted and spurred, and with a grave look on his face. "I have just been to the Ferry, Dorothy," said he, "and I have sad news. John Brownell was found this morning on Gould Island, dead, with a bullet through his heart, and Peter Burton is nowhere to be found."

## III.

Fifteen years have passed away, and Rhode Island, lovely as ever, is again basking in the October sun. Isaiah Scott's house and farm at Ferry Neck are unchanged, and as on that day when Peter Burton received his dismissal and departed in bitterness of soul, the fleecy clouds are floating above, the skies and waters have the same prismatic hues, and the meadows, verdant with grass or yellow with golden corn, are sloping in peaceful beauty to the shore. Changes have taken place nevertheless. Isaiah and his wife have been gathered to their fathers, and Dorothy and her husband reign in their stead. Did she marry Joseph Smith? Joseph Smith, indeed! She married Elkanah Perkins, the wealthiest merchant in Newport, and now spends only a part of her time at Ferry Neck; and if you will examine the records of the Friends, you will find that poor Joseph, "faithful unto death," lived and died a bachelor. Other changes have taken place on Rhode Island. There is very little live stock to be seen; many of the farms look dilapidated and poor; and across the north end of the island runs a line of fortifications garrisoned by British soldiers. We understand the poverty now: King George is master here, and at whatever cost, Rhode Island must contribute to the support of his army.

On the opposite hills of Tiverton are the American forces, having in their ranks many of the unfortunate Rhode Islanders whose homes are going to ruin before their eyes. Miserable as many of the farms look, there is, near the center of the island, one rather worse for wear than any of the others. For fifteen years it has been unoccupied; its doorway is overrun with blackberry vines; its stone walls are broken and falling down, and the neighbors' cattle graze in its fields without let or hindrance. Several times has application been made to the Probate Court to have it divided amongst the heirs, but the objection has always been made that its owner, Peter Burton, may still be alive. And now, this bright October day, comes the news, not only that he is

alive, but that he has come home. Yesterday he landed in Newport from the Cuban vessel, it is said, a widower, bringing with him his little son and a negro servant; and that he has ridden out to look at his dilapidated place and, wretched as it is, is making arrangements to occupy it.

It is Sunday—and as the Friends gather at the meeting-house, Peter's return is the universal topic of conversation among them. Many regarded him as little better than a murderer: in that unprecedented duel without seconds, who knew whether there were foul or fair play? A few, however, were more charitable, among them Joseph Simpson, a venerable man, long an "approved" preacher. "Friends," he says, "we must have charity for all men. Our church holds, with reason, that to take human life under any circumstances is murder; but many of our younger Friends, especially since the war broke out, have adopted the standards of the world. And as to the Gould Island affair, who knows anything about it? Why there were no seconds, we cannot tell; it was a singular affair. But let us not add the suspicion of foul play to the odium that already attaches to Peter Burton."

There was some discussion as to the probability of his coming to meeting. Most thought he would come. To be sure, his name and poor John Brownell's were long ago stricken out of the books, but he was a birthright member, and surely after being away so long he would want to see the old meeting-house and the familiar faces of the Friends. They were not left long in doubt, for while they talked the clattering of horses' feet was heard, and presently Peter Burton, richly dressed and well mounted, his little son on a smart pacer at his side, and his negro servant following at a little distance, rode into the meeting-house yard. Nearly everyone was looking at him as he and his son dismounted and gave the horses to the servant.

Well, he is changed, but not as much as one would expect, is the general comment. There are lines on his clean-shaven face that were not there when he went away; his hair

is gray and he has grown stout. He has a cynical expression that is not exactly pleasant to see, but he does not look as if devoured by remorse, or as if the recollections of his misdeeds had affected his health.

It rather pleased the Friends that he attended meeting so soon after his arrival, and many of them began unconsciously to have a better opinion of him. But if they knew the only motive that actuated him in coming they would perhaps have felt differently. It is not on account of the meeting or to revive old associations, but to see Dorothy that he is here. Though he has been married, and since his departure has seen much of the world, he has never been in love with any other woman. She has taken precedence of everything else in his thoughts, and though he doubtless knows it would be better for his peace of mind never to see her again, he has come here for that express purpose. As he walks toward the meeting-house, Elkanah Perkins' yellow coach—the only coach on the island—comes into the yard, and his heart gives a great throb as Dorothy alights. Her face is hidden by the Quaker bonnet, but he would know her among a thousand. He has not yet spoken to any of the Friends, most of whom he recognizes; but passing hurriedly by them, he steps up to her and, holding out his hand, says huskily, "Dorothy does thee know me?"

Dorothy was not startled; she was calm, as usual, for she had heard of his arrival and was prepared for this meeting. She replied very sweetly, and as with her old coquettish manner she took his hand and looked up from under the deep Quaker bonnet, for the first time in fifteen years he sees her face. It is a pretty face. Except that the first freshness and bloom of youth are gone, it has changed but little, and yet somehow it gives him a shock, and a great and sudden change comes over him as he gazes. Was this, after all, the face that had haunted him and held him captive for so many years? How he has idealized it! Can it be that it really was as insipid as it looks now when he last saw it? He does not understand his own feelings, for he almost feels a dis-

like for the pretty woman he has so longed to see. Then a great throb of joy thrills through him. He is in love no longer; the shackles which have kept him a slave for so many years have fallen to the ground and he is free!

After a few polite inquiries and commonplace remarks he entered the house where most of the Friends were now assembled, and sat down in his old place. Never did air seem so sweet as that which streams in through the open door; never did sky seem so blue as the little patch he sees through the window back of the gallery; never, it seems to him, even in his boyhood, did his blood so leap and throb through his veins. He was a man at last, and life seemed to open up before him with new possibilities, new hopes, and new aspirations.

Then his thoughts went back over his life, so spoiled and wasted by his passion for this woman who never cared for him, and who passed unmoved through the trials that stirred his soul to the depths. He thought of the many irregularities by which he had sought to forget it; of how in his bitterness he had lost all faith in God and man; and the face of his dead wife rose before him—whose beseeching eyes always seemed asking for the love which he never gave, but which he kept for this soulless statue of flesh and blood. His face lost its cynical expression, and his eyes filled with tears as he bowed his face in his hands.

For nearly an hour the Friends sat silent. At length Joseph Simpson rose and said impressively: "Dear Friends, the charge I have laid upon me to give you this morning is a short one. As I took my seat the Lord was very near me, and the language of my soul was, 'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.'"

Like balm the beautiful words fell on Peter's heart. Life! yes, that was what he wanted. He had never lived before, but he would now, and he would believe, for belief is life-



giving. And again he bowed his head, this time in silent thanksgiving.

Presently the shaking of hands indicated that the meeting was over. When Peter came to meeting he did not think he would soon want to repeat the experience, but now everything seemed changed. He remained in his seat till Friend Simpson passed down the aisle, when, after exchanging cordial greetings with the old man, he astonished him by asking if he might be restored to membership with the Friends. "It is impossible, Peter," said he. "We disowned thee because thy hands had shed blood, and we cannot receive thee back. But we shall be glad to have the assurance of thy repentance, and always pleased to have thee sit with us."

Peter's face fell. Ever since he left Rhode Island he had lived among people who knew nothing of the Gould Island affair, and for the first time he realized the full weight of the stigma that rested upon him in this community. For an instant a touch of his old dogged recklessness came back to him; but his better spirit asserted itself. "I ought to have known," said he, "that you cannot receive me back; and it is probably best for all concerned that you cannot. I suppose that I am in bad odor with the Friends. But I have come home to stay."

"I am glad thee has, Peter. The past cannot be mended, but thee has probably many years of life before thee yet, and I feel sure thee will live them to better advantage."

The emotion incident to a change such as had come over Peter soon passes off; and on the following morning he felt glad that his desire to reunite himself with the Friends had been nipped in the bud. Though by birth and early education a Friend, he had seen nothing of the Friends since he left the island, and all his habits of life and thought were so different from theirs that he would not have made a good Quaker. He continued, however, to attend their meetings, though not as regularly as Friend Simpson had hoped; and as the weeks passed, a kindlier feeling toward him took root among them.



## IV.

Along the two roads which, then, as now, extended down Rhode Island, known as the East and West roads, the British had stationed sentinels at stated intervals of from one to two miles. By this means they could keep posted as to the movements of the farmers, and detect any inclination on their part to extend aid or comfort to the enemy. The rules, however, were very lax. There were few ways in which the farmers could be of any assistance to the Americans, and the majority of those left on the Island, being Quakers, were non-partisans, and were allowed to pass and repass unchallenged. Though Peter Burton was a stranger, no exception was made in his case, and he came and went as he chose. But his was not a nature that could long remain neutral on any issue. His house was near the headquarters of General Prescott, with whom he soon became acquainted, and several times, by the information thus obtained, he was able to put his countrymen at Tiverton on their guard and to defeat plans for surprising them and carrying off their cattle, grain, and supplies.

In spite of the devastation of the island and the uncertain issue of the war, those were happy days to Peter. The sensation of being of some use in the world, and of doing things from other than selfish motives, was a new and delicious sensation; and as he frequented the houses of the British officers, or stealthily crossed the bay at night to convey some needed information to the Americans, the ambition filled his mind to take his place and use his talents in the great struggle that was going forward. He was naturally a leader of men, and when, some weeks after his arrival, he was offered a captain's commission in the Continental army, he gladly accepted it. Instead, however, of proceeding at once to Tiverton to take his command, he decided to remain a few days longer on the island, as a scheme was on foot to surprise the Americans at Quaker Point in Tiverton and carry off a large flock of sheep and a quantity of grain;

and he wanted, if possible, to get particulars of this plan before leaving the island.

It happened one evening, as he went to call on General Prescott, who liked company and liked to have him come in and take a social glass, he was told the general had gone to Newport. Waiting for a moment in the room, his eye fell on the general's desk, where lay carelessly an open letter, addressed to Lieutenant Forbes, giving, as his glance at once took in, complete directions for the management of the Quaker Point expedition. Requesting the negro servant to go and fetch him a glass of wine, he slipped the letter into his pocket—thinking only, in the anxiety of the moment, of how he could save the men at Tiverton. Then, drinking the general's health and asking the servant to give his compliments to him when he returned, he hurried home, had his horse saddled, and prepared for immediate departure. The negro, however, was not so dull as he thought; and just as Peter was buckling on his spurs, while his horse stood at the door, two stalwart fellows entered and, laying each a hand on his shoulders, arrested him as a spy.

Peter saw that his case was desperate. He well knew the punishment of a spy. With the strength born of desperation he hurled his captors from him, and, leaping upon his horse, disappeared in the darkness. The men were on their feet in an instant and shouting at the top of their voices; and not daring to go along the road, where he felt sure he would be stopped, Peter turned into an adjoining field, hoping to get across to the East Road and beyond the sentinels stationed there, before his pursuers, who would probably keep to the road, could overtake him. He would also save by this course some two miles. But the night was excessively dark, and his horse, not being used to "cross country" work, refused many of the leaps, compelling circuitous journeys through gateways and gaps; and when he came in sight of the East Road, the unusual number of moving lights and the noise of horses' feet left him no doubt that his pursuers had reached it before him. There was but one chance left,

and that a desperate one. By still keeping to the fields, he might work northward to the line of fortifications, then, entering the road, run the gauntlet of sentinels, and escape to the low land of Ferry Neck, where from its proximity to Tiverton, they would hardly dare follow him.

Scarcely had he made up his mind to this, and turned his horse's head toward the north, when from behind the low stone wall just in front of him up jumped three men. Two bullets whizzed by his head and a third struck him in the leg. He was discovered, and in an instant a large body of horsemen were in hot pursuit.

It is said by those who have narrowly escaped drowning, that in a few seconds a review of their whole lives has passed before them. It is so in many cases of danger. Following the blind instinct of self-preservation, Peter had urged his horse to a run, but he knew that practically there was no hope. As the bullets whistled past his head, his mind went back with the rapidity of a dream to his happy boyhood; then he seemed to be riding down to Ferry Neck to see Dorothy; and one dark night very like this rose before him, when he rode over these same fields after his dark errand to Gould Island. Then passed before him the wearisome and wasted years that he had since passed; his marriage, which but for himself might have been a happy one; and a picture of his little son, who was now fast asleep at home.

A bullet struck him in the shoulder, wounding him severely, and by the swaying, uncertain motion of his horse he knew that he too was severely wounded. In a vague way he wondered how long this would last, and like a man falling asleep while listening to the ticking of a clock, he heard the measured hoof beats of his pursuers' horses. Faint from loss of blood, his eyes involuntarily closed; but he kept his seat and his hold upon the reins. Still swept rapidly before him the panorama of his life. Again he was landing at Newport; again he was at the Friends' meeting; and again like balm there fell upon his ear the beautiful words, "I am the

resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Another shot, and the curtain fell; the panorama was over. Shot through the heart, he fell forward upon his horse's neck, and both came heavily to the ground.

## V.

By a singular coincidence, on the same day that Peter met his death, a mulatto named Joshua Nipson was arrested as a spy by the Americans at Tiverton, was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged. Tradition describes Nipson as a man of more than ordinary intelligence, though of ungovernable passions. He had always lived in Tiverton, and had been the trusted and confidential servant of John Brownell up to the time of the latter's tragic death. Before his execution, which took place on the following day, he stated that he had a confession to make in regard to the Gould Island affair. His guard took it down in writing; and though but for Peter's return the whole thing had been well-nigh forgotten, it created quite a sensation in the camp.

It seems that John Brownell, on returning from his last visit to Dorothy, had told Nipson of his rejection by Isaiah Scott, and also that he expected to be called out by Peter Burton. Later in the evening he called Nipson and told him that he was sorry for the part he had played in Peter's dismissal; that furthermore, as they had both been rejected, there was now nothing to quarrel over; and ordered him to cross the bay and convey his apologies to Peter and request him to meet him at Gould Island, alone, the next day at four o'clock, that he might make explanations and effect a reconciliation. Now it happened that Brownell had with him a large sum of money, and it had occurred to Nipson that in case of his master's death, which he thought almost certain, as he was a bad shot, he might appropriate these funds without detection, as no one else knew anything about them. He

was, therefore, sorry for this change; and while crossing the bay on his errand he devised a plan by which he might still possess himself of the money. Instead of delivering his full message to Peter, he merely requested him to meet his master alone on Gould Island, naming the hour as half-past four, and giving him no hint as to the purpose of the meeting. The next day, after his master had landed on Gould Island, he approached the island from the south with a companion whom he had taken into his confidence, and landed in a little cove, where he could not be seen either from Tiverton or Rhode Island. Entering the woods, and making his way close to his master, who asked in surprise what had brought him there, he shot him through the heart, and then quickly appropriated the money, but left the watch and other valuables. It had been his intention to kill Peter also, reasoning that, after what had happened at Isaiah Scott's, the public would believe that a duel had been fought which resulted fatally to both parties. But hearing Peter, who was doubtless armed, approaching much sooner than he had expected, and not having had time to reload his pistol, he hastily retreated, and had just time to conceal himself behind some bushes when Peter reached the spot. From his place of concealment he saw Peter carefully examine the body and the still smoking pistol which lay beside it—then with a muttered exclamation which he could not understand, rapidly descend the cliff, get into his boat, and pull away. Nipson divided his booty with his companion, who had remained with their boat, and under cover of the darkness returned to Tiverton.

Why had Peter chosen not to tell what he knew about this matter? As he could not have suspected the presence of any one else on the island, he must have believed it a case of suicide. In his bitterness of soul, was he willing for Dorothy to look upon him as John Brownell's slayer? or did he believe that the circumstantial evidence against him was so strong that no denial or explanation on his part would be of any use? We cannot tell. He had apparently nothing

to gain by his silence, and the motives that actuated him must always remain a mystery.

To the Quakers who, though they had disowned him, could never get rid of the feeling that in a certain way he still belonged to them, the knowledge of his innocence was most grateful. The black stain on his reputation was removed. His life had not indeed been what they could have wished, but he had "lived without fear, and died without reproach," and, non-partisans as they were, they did not think the less of him that he had lost his life in the service of his country.

In the graveyard behind the old Friends' meeting-house—an obscure place and seldom visited—can be seen the graves of Dorothy Perkins and her family, Isaiah Scott and his wife, Joseph Simpson, and Joseph Smith. But Peter Burton's resting place is still more obscure. This inscription:

HERE LYETH YE BODYE OF  
PETER BURTON  
WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRYE  
NOVEMBER 10TH, 1778,  
AGED 42 YEARS.

is found in the old family burying ground on the Burton farm, far from the traveled road, and overgrown with blackberry vines and briars, on a rough slab of Rhode Island slate.





# Pride and Poverty





## Pride and Poverty\*

By MRS. CATHERINE R. WILLIAMS

AT the close of the Revolutionary War that was so disastrous to Newport, whatever blessings it conferred on the country in general, it is well remembered there were many families left in poverty, some in utter destitution. The Goths and Vandals of the British Army had made sad havoc of that beautiful place, and many who were left in a suffering condition had been not only comfortable but even affluent before the spoiler came. But there was a chord of sympathy between these persecuted patriots that united them all as a band of brothers; they had suffered in common and in the common cause of their country, and the object of those sufferings was gained. They felt they were freed forever from the shackles of that tyrannic Government that had compelled many of them to drink the cup of misery to the dregs, and in that they could rejoice together. If any man at that season had a little more than his neighbor, that neighbor was welcome to partake.

\* \* Williams, *Annals of the Aristocracy*. Providence, 1845.

This kindly and unselfish spirit, it is true, did not continue long. The wheels of time moved on and the hum of business began to be heard once more in the late deserted streets. Commerce again spread her sails in the capacious harbor, and the late barren acres, where only the foot of the soldier trod as he passed his nightly rounds or sallied forth on some marauding expedition, now yielded to the plow and the spade. In short, when the place began to look up again, men began to be selfish.

But even during the season of kindly hearts and liberal hands there was one set of *poor devils*, as they used to denominate them, that fared hard—and that was the remnant of the Tory families. Most of these, particularly if they had much property, were conveyed to England at the evacuation of the Town; but from various causes some were necessarily left behind. Among these were two old ladies—maiden sisters—who had lived together some fifty years or more, and who would no more have thought of crossing the water at their time of life than of making a world. Indeed, being women, there seemed not much danger to them even from the injured Americans, and they still remained living in the same manner they had continued to do for the last fifty years. They were very lofty women, and had been accustomed to hold the canaille at a terrible distance. They were English-born, but had no connections on the Island. In truth there was a mystery about them that, during the early period of their residence, had given rise to many silly stories respecting their birth and parentage—some even affirming they were of royal blood, and sent over to the New World to prevent family troubles.

Be that as it might, the two desolate sisters continued in the country, but not in the same situation as the war apparently left them in. Their stately habitation was soon exchanged for a more humble one, into which they removed in the night, in order, doubtless, to conceal their poverty.

Notwithstanding the cold and disdainful distance at which their poor neighbors had been held, one or two good-natured

ones ventured to drop in on the evening in which their goods were removed and offered their assistance, which was repulsed with a degree of acrimony that fairly amounted to ill breeding.

It could not be expected that in a new neighborhood principally inhabited by the poorer class of people they would excite much sympathy. Indeed, their cold and forbidding exterior seemed quite a sufficient protection from any advances towards familiarity; but as though this were not enough they evidently devised various means to keep their humble neighbors from becoming sufficiently acquainted to venture any such attempts. They generally drew their water after dark, so that no one could see them at the well, and never ventured to cross the dooryard without being buried up in an old bonnet, which almost entirely hid their faces and from under which they never ventured to look to the right or to the left for fear, as was supposed, some one might give them a passing good-morning.

The place where they located themselves was a cheap tenement in Broad Street, near the head of Oak Street, which it will be recollected leads down into Tanners Street, then always called the back street. In this street, immediately at the foot of the lane, several poor families resided. Here curiosity had been excited to find out how these good ladies lived, and hours were sometimes spent in watching their habitation. But it was in vain; the washing, marketing and baking, if there was any, appeared to be done in the night, as no human being could ever contrive to surprise them at any of these employments. That something of the kind was done at some time was evident, as they existed, and appeared, whenever a glimpse was caught of their persons, to be clean and decent.

Among those who resided immediately in their neighborhood was our Grandmother Read, that benevolent and heroic woman of whom we have given a slight sketch in the first series of "Revolutionary Tales." It was her practice to go around, in cold weather particularly, and ascertain the situ-

ation of her poor neighbors, in order to minister to their wants; and gladly would she have ministered to the retired females who tenanted the neighboring chambers, if she could by any means have discovered their need of such assistance. But their proud bearing still continued to keep people at a distance, and besides they were Tories; and our grandmother, a sturdy Republican, had such an antipathy to the race that the serpent in her path would not have shocked her half so much as to meet one.

Of the politics of these good ladies no one could doubt, as they had several times been heard praying for the King. Added to this, Mrs. R. had a real Christian horror of pride; she had compassion for every other infirmity under the sun. Unlike most women who have always supported a good character themselves and look down with contempt and scorn upon all their frailer sisters, she pitied in others what she would have despised in herself, and if she did not pray with the church, "That the Lord would raise up those who fall," she did more—she tried to raise them up herself, and to seek to restore the lost and ruined child to the home of her parents and the esteem of the community; in short, she compassionated, as we have said, every frailty but pride, which she affirmed was made for devils, thus making an improvement upon the Proverb that asserts it "was never made for man."

With all our grandmother's hatred of pride and Toryism, however, the situation of the two recluse sisters had occasioned some misgivings in her mind. They had now resided several years in the neighborhood and their eccentricities had become an old story; yet she thought she discovered in their attenuated persons and feeble steps an evidence either of want, or ill health, or both, and it was now in the depth of an exceedingly cold and inclement winter. But all attempts to obtain access to their apartment, unless she forced herself in, seemed forbidden her, several who had made an attempt of that sort having been baffled by one of the inmates

holding the door in her hand while she demanded *their business*.

Contrary then, to those divine suggestions which an invisible spirit offers to our minds whenever there is an act of duty to be performed, our good grandmother continued to procrastinate, and held back, in a state of irresolution, until the occasion of which we are going to speak.

It was during a tremendously cold day, when the snow blew furiously and the drifts on one side of the street were nearly up to the second story, that a man came thundering at the front door, calling to Mrs. Read to "go over to that old house"—pointing—"for two women had been frozen to death there."

The shivering children were all drawn around the fire that day, after spending the whole morning in stopping up crevices to keep the cold out, but every one now offered to go and see what could be done. Telling the oldest boy to bring over a wheelbarrow of wood as soon as possible, and seizing a little bottle of French brandy and some restoratives, the old lady hastened through the snowdrifts to the residence of the two spinsters. The poor woman who lived below had observed on that day that no step had been heard overhead the whole morning, and although the tenants above were in the habit of lying in bed very late, as she supposed, to save wood, yet it was an unusual thing not to hear them stirring before noon; and being somewhat uneasy, too, on account of the piercing cold, she sent one of the children up to see if anything was the matter. The child reported, on her return, that nobody answered. Seriously alarmed, now, the poor woman laid her infant in the cradle and ran up, and, feeling something must be the matter, she succeeded in bursting in the door, and then with loud shrieks flew down to the door to raise the neighbors. The wind and snow blew so furiously that it almost cut one's face to approach the door, and no one appeared in sight except the stranger before-mentioned.

Our grandmother was the first that arrived on the spot,



and the sight that presented itself was truly appalling. One of the forlorn beings was lying on the floor, wrapped in an old coverlet, with her feet placed to the ashes, where it appeared some embers had been raked up the night before. She was dead—frozen stiff and cold. The other poor unfortunate, who had remained in bed, was frozen also but not, as they first supposed, dead—though insensible. With the help of some of the neighbors who soon arrived, the corpse was removed, a large fire made, and every means resorted to to restore the survivor—warm brandy and water were poured down her throat, and she was rubbed in snow until animation returned.

Not a crust of bread or food of any kind could be found in this habitation, and the last stick of wood, it appeared, had been consumed the day before. The Jury gave in a verdict of death "from cold and starvation."

Every effort was made by the kind people to restore the unfortunate woman who survived that night; but she only lingered a few days. Nor could all the methods taken—and they were many—ever bring from her anything relating to their mysterious origin. She was asked, "Had she no friends whom she wished apprised of her situation?"

*None*, was the answer.

"Would she name any relative or friend who should be summoned to attend her sister's funeral?"

"No,"—and she added, "Keep her a day or two longer and I will be buried with her."

As it was evident from the first that she could not survive many days, this was done. She was asked if she had no worldly affairs to settle. "No." Would she wish to see a clergyman? "No."

To our good grandmother's lecture on the sinfulness of pride she seemed to pay some attention, and thanked her with more warmth than she had ever before been known to show, adding, "Yes, it was sinful; I ought to have conquered it,"—yet still maintained the same guarded silence with respect to her history.

In a corner of the common burial ground, where the stranger and pauper are laid to rest, there is a nearly sunken stone that shows the spot where the two mysterious sisters repose in one grave. Other neighbors have taken the place of those who remembered their shocking fate, and other buildings stand where the old house was pulled down many, many years since, where they resided. Our good relative, who has now been dead some thirty years, never forgot them, and while we trudged by her side with a little basket of provisions—on one of her benevolent excursions—she narrated the story of their mournful exit, ending with one of her favorite maxims—"Pride and Poverty is a dreadful thing."



"My Nannie O"





## “My Nannie O”\*

By NORA PERRY

THERE she is, looking straight down at us with those frank, brown eyes. . . .

I call it a gallery, though it's only a wide hall, with no grandeur of fresco or carving; but it is hung with these old family portraits—from end to end. If my father had a passion in the world, it was for collecting these painted semblances of his race; and here they are, a motley assemblage enough, “peace to their ashes.” Here they are—man, matron and maid, soldiers, priests and scholars; and one or two with a ribbon across their broad breasts, starred and otherwise ornamented with signs of a foreign service. Courtly looking cavaliers, in good sooth, with faces that remind you of those French heroes whose pictures are scattered all through the history of Napoleon. These are *my* favorites;

\* Perry, *The Tragedy of the Unexpected and Other Stories*. Boston, Houghton, 1880.

but my father was fonder of "My Nannie O" than all the rest.

"How came she by that title?"

Wait. I will let her tell her own story. Here is her diary—written with her own hand—that hand whose perfect copy clasps the great fan of pheasant feathers there. Just think, my lady, while you wave and flirt that little sandalwood bijou, of the cunning dexterity those other small fair fingers must have exerted in the management of that enormous thing! Yet, as Domenichino said of his early paintings, "It is not so bad, after all." You perceive how the baby proportions of the hand are enhanced by its effort to compass the fan's bulky size, and how, in the stately movements, the soft, plummy tips would waft like some sunset cloud between the lovely girl and her adorers. Almost a century ago! What a long, long time! . . .

#### HER DIARY

June 10, 1795

Today I am twenty years old, and today I promised to begin a diary—a daily diary to the end of my life. The end of my life! It makes me shiver! I wonder when I shall die! and I am so afraid of that thing called Death—that thing! Yes, an actual presence. Dr. Parker says I must be very wicked to feel so; and if I don't repent and love the Lord, that I shall go to hell. His words are mere words—nothing more to me. "Repent and love the Lord!" He talks as if I had only to *will* repentance and love. Let us see; what have I to repent of? Last night, in dancing with Mr. Glancey, I let my glove fall, and when he picked it up so gallantly, and asked to keep it, I pretended a great deal of propriety, and demanded it back again, when I didn't care a pin for it. Indeed, to tell the honest truth, which I will do in this diary, because it is between my soul and me, I wouldn't care for his keeping it *provided* he had stolen it—it was a pretty glove and shaped to a pretty hand! In this, then, I have acted a lie; and I ought to repent of lies. I



wonder what Tom's wife would say; I'll ask her. She's very decorous and very strict. I shall ask her, "Jane, what should I have replied to Mr. Glancey, when he picked up my glove in the dance the other night, and asked to keep it?" Jane will look at me in silent amazement a moment; then she will answer, "Why, No," of course! "What, when I would rather he would have it than not? Wouldn't that be a lie, Jane?"

Then how she will talk to me. I "must be very corrupt to feel so!" I am not corrupt! I am only natural. When he picked up the glove and asked for it, the thought came, quick as a flash, that it was a pretty thing for him to ask, and that it would be a pretty reminder of me. Then another flash brought up all the Sister Janes and the Aunt Prudences, and I answered "No!" Eh! but what did the naughty Nannie do next? She gave him the flower that had lain on her neck through the evening; and when he kissed the flower and said, "Happy flower, who does not envy thee?" she made him a sweeping courtesy, and sent him a laughing response very softly, so that the Sister Janes and the Aunt Prudences couldn't hear!

French women do these things, Jane will tell me, and French women are coquettes. Well, but then I came honestly enough by it, Sister Jane. There is blood of the *ancien régime* in my veins, you know. Viscount Chastellux, who came over in the French fleet, was Mamma's brother, dear; that's his portrait over the fireplace in Mamma's room, you remember. He named me, too; and they say I look like him—have his nose and his hair. Only think—that splendid young officer! I am so vain of it my head is quite turned.

There, I had forgotten that I was to confess my sins here on this white paper. Good little page, I'll call thee a white-robed priest. That's it—I'll turn Catholic just quietly here, and tell my beads on that pearl necklace De Grémont gave me. Now, down on your knees, Nannie, to confession!

*Firstly*, I have told a lie.

*Secondly*, I stayed away from church last Sabbath, because my new bonnet wasn't done.

*Thirdly*, I got into a passion with Hannah for putting powder on my hair when I told her not, and boxed her ears. That's a pretty story to tell my lovers, eh?

*Fourthly*, after making *beaux yeux* at young Parson Leighton, I refused him flatly, yesterday.

*Fifthly*, I went out on Tuesday with my young brother John, and gave him the slip while he stopped to watch the man with the puppet-show; and just at that time Mr. Glancey, whom Papa does not favor, came up with me, and we went out on the old road for a walk, and didn't get back for two hours or more.

*Sixthly*, when Papa found this out by little John and reproved me with sharpness, I swept him a saucy courtesy, and reminded him that I should never demean my old French blood: his first marriage, before he ever saw Mamma, was a *mésalliance* with one of the provincial *bourgeoisie*.

*Seventhly*, on going out of the room I encountered little John and scolded him for talebearing, shaming him into tears and indignant denials. Whereupon I told him that he should die in silence, if he would be a gentleman, rather than to tell secrets; and I have treated him very cruelly since.

*Eighthly*, I refused to ride with Mr. Edward Overing yesterday morning because he chose to give me some advice about my conduct on the night of the ball, telling him I wished there would be another revolution, that we might see specimens of gentlemen here in America such as my mother remembers, and telling him various savage things that I'll warrant spoilt his sleep that night.

*Ninthly*, when my mother asked me to go to Mrs. Overing's this afternoon with the apple jelly for little Sally, who has the measles, I answered "No!" very unbecomingly, and said I was tired of the Overings, and wouldn't wait on them any longer. There was no one else to go then, and I saw her set out herself without a word.

Here's a list for you, good priest. Which do I repent?

Which? Hear that! Well, I don't repent giving Mr. Glancey the flower, nor the courtesy; but about the lie? Oh, I'm repenting that in sackcloth and ashes! And I don't feel very bad about my bonnet sin, though I suppose that is because I am so wicked. But I am sorry I boxed Hannah's ears, for it was not becoming a gentlewoman; and Hannah is a good girl, though she tries my temper with her forgetfulness. Then I am not sorry I refused Parson Leighton, for I didn't want him. And I don't repent walking with Mr. Glancey, though Papa frowns at him. He is a gentleman, though he is a gay British soldier, and a second son; but I am sorry I spoke up to Papa as I did—that was mean and cowardly in me to reflect upon his poor young wife, whom he married for love, and who died so soon. And I am sorry I treated little Johnny so cruelly, for the lad is far better than I, and loves me more than anybody or anything, save his romantic notions of right and truth. As for refusing to ride with Mr. Edward Overing, I am not repenting much. He, to set himself up as my adviser! For my last offense I repent most heartily and honestly, and long to lay it all to the door of his high-mightiness, Edward Overing; for if he had but held his peace, I should never have answered my sweet Mamma so rudely, and allowed her to go through the hot sun on that tedious walk. My sweet Mamma, who never said a sharp word to her disobedient, disrespectful daughter! But I am to put it all down to my hot temper—my fiery Chastellux blood. I know there is no use in excuses. Tomorrow I will do penance. I will scourge my willful spirit by spending the whole day in Mamma's service; and it is housecleaning day. . . .

So endeth the first lesson of my diary; so, good little priest, I have knelt at thy confessional. Bless me in the name of my godfather, who believed in the holy Catholic Church, the saints and the martyrs. . . .

Wednesday, 1795.

This morning I sat to Mr. Allston for my portrait. Papa and Mr. Malbone came, in the midst of the sitting, which

relieved me, for I was fast getting into a fidget; for, as Papa truly says, I do not relish sitting still, or in one place long. Mr. Malbone came and looked over Mr. Allston's shoulder at Mr. Allston's request, for they are famous friends; and I heard him say:—

“What a prophetic look you have put into the eyes; where did you find that lurking sadness?” “Where, indeed?” and Mr. Allston suspended his brush to look at me—a perplexed expression crossed his face, and he seemed disturbed. Then Mr. Malbone came and stood beside me, and began telling me of our dear, delightful old Newport—told me strange and wild traditions, till I got to thinking, I remember, of a story Mamma once related to us when we were children; a story of how my Uncle Chastellux was once thrown upon a curious old island not unlike our Newport—though it was in the south of France, and of a picture he brought away—a picture of a lovely court dame, who was banished for some suspected treason from the kingdom to this little, quaint island city, and who pined and pined for her native land, till at last, grown desperate and crazed, she took her life.

I was thinking of all this as I sat there, when I was aroused by an exclamation of Mr. Allston's, “Look at her now, Edward!” And I glanced up to see Mr. Malbone regarding me earnestly. “There, you see where I got the prophetic look!”

Papa came forward from the window where he had been reading a letter, and surveyed the portrait: “My dear, of what were you thinking a while ago?” I told him readily, and was surprised to see a heavy frown settle over his face, and he uttered his usual word when vexed.

“Pshaw!” and then, “That childish story has frightened her; get that look off, Mr. Allston, or I shall not know my brave Nan.”

“I must take another sitting for it; she is too fatigued now,” said Mr. Allston. “And thus it was arranged that I should go again the next day, which is tomorrow.

Mr. Malbone promised me to finish his story of Newport

"MY NANNIE O"

sometime, if I would tell him mine—the one to which I alluded to Papa. "He is a nice youth, but very young—too young for you, my gay little coquette; so don't be turning the boy's brain with those arch glances," Mr. Allston whispered as I went out. That's the way they go on. I can't say a civil thing to a young gentleman but I am trying to turn his brain. It's all in my blood—this fiery Chastellux blood, that sparkles and foams like wine—so what can I do? What do I care? Yes, what do I care? I am free—free as God made me. Will I sell my birthright for a mess of pottage? . . .

Ah, but I yearn for *la belle France*; for the gay streets, the *assemblées*, and the warm hearts. I am only half American. I cannot get used to their cold stiff ways; they are like their cold chilly climate. I shrink and shudder under the influence of both. Ah, it is very *triste* here, very *triste*!

Hark! what is that? A guitar. Who plays a guitar? *Mon dieu!* can it be De Grémont!

Wednesday, 1795

A whole week since I wrote here last. How irregular I am! Ah *ciel*, how perplexed one gets trying to think in two ways! Ah, that I had never left *la belle France*; that I had remained with *ma grande mère*!

But I shall never make a proper diary in this way. Where did I leave off—a week since? I shall begin on Thursday then, the day I went to Mr. Allston—what am I thinking of? Shall I forget the strains of the guitar that moved me so strangely? I knew it could be no other than De Grémont, and I sat spellbound. I could scarcely credit my ears; but when I heard that low sweet song of Burns's he always sung to me,—

"And I'll awa' to Nannie O,"

my heart gave one great bound and I wept. He had come away from sunny France, away from the grand court, the palaces, and the people of his name, for me. In that moment I forgot that I had promised Papa but yesterday to retract my refusal to young Parson Leighton. I forgot that I had even fancied, myself, that I liked the young man;

for in that moment I knew that but one love, but one passion, would ever have possession of my heart; that the love I had thought time and absence had stifled was only sleeping; that De Grémont was my destiny; and that I must give him some sign. What? A happy idea came to me; I caught my guitar—the very guitar he had given me in France—and began playing that sweet old melody from Favart's opera. I did not dare to sing, but he knew the words well:

“Though young and yet untaught,  
New feelings sway me now;  
This love I never sought,  
It came I know not how.”

As I ceased he took up the strain and gave me that tenderest of all songs:

“Ma mie  
Ma douce amie,  
Réponds à mes amours,  
Fidèle  
A cette belle  
Je l'aimerai toujours.”

Then I heard his retreating footsteps, and I sat there quite still till they had entirely ceased. And he knew me well—he did not linger: ah, he knows everything so well—all the little nice shades of delicacy and courtly breeding. There is none like him here, not one; and I thought he had forgotten me, perhaps. And now he has come to seek me. Will Papa frown upon him or smile? The French are our friends, surely—the friends of America—then De Grémont has princely blood, a noble lineage. He is not very rich, but Papa is not sordid.

These thoughts, I remember, passed like lightning through my mind, and all night they kept with me in my dreams. In the morning I awoke with a new feeling. Life was no longer stale, no longer *triste* here. While I had been sighing for *la belle France* more than its kingdom had come to me!



"MY NANNIE O"

I dressed myself with unusual care, for I knew not at what hour he would present himself. I had many fears that he would delay until my appointment with Mr. Allston arrived, for I knew what French habits were; but *eh charmante!* at just a quarter before ten I heard a voice I knew so well asking at the door for Papa. Oh, the sweet southern accent of France, how it thrilled my heart! Then the two tones reached me from the study; then the tinkling of glasses as Papa offered him wine; then—ah, then, a message for me!

I ran down with such nervous haste I shook the powder from my hair upon my neck, and then I stayed at the threshold in a little fright of pleasure and pain. Presently I summoned courage and opened the door. A mist came before my eyes, but through it I was conscious of a glance that wrapped me from that moment away from the world. Then he started forward to meet me—he took my hand—he murmured softly:

"And I see you once more! I have prayed for this hour, Nannie."

Here my father interposed: "De Grémont, you know upon what terms you meet!"

I heard the words, but they sounded afar off. I did not catch their meaning. I only comprehended De Grémont's reply as he waived his hand with a little gesture as though he put away some obstacle. "Give her to me five minutes, five seconds, Monsieur M'Lean, and then—" I was in some sort of a dream for a space, severed from my common daily life and in a little sphere of rest and delight. Then my hand was released with a lingering pressure; it was like a farewell, and before he spoke I felt as if the north wind was blowing down to my southern vintage land, and I was once more alone.

"M'amselle," he said, "I have told your father that I love you—that I have good blood, good position and respectable means. He approves all this, but refuses you to me because I am of the Mother Church; because I am not of



your faith; he says you are to be given in marriage to a priest of his order!"

Then I told the whole truth. Was this a time for faltering? I told of my preference long ago when we walked in the garden of the old château, and how it had grown to something deeper now, and that I could never consent to marry another man.

Then my father put on his iron look. Ah me! and as good as swore that I should never marry one of the corrupt Catholic Church: indeed, that I should never marry other than young Leighton. My blood rose at this—my fiery Chastellux blood—and I said some rash things; and there before us both he stood, De Grémont, looking like an angel—so kind, so sorrowful, so calm.

Into my storm of words my father's stern voice broke again: he never looked at me.

"De Grémont, you know the terms upon which you meet."

"That I would give her up if I could see her now—I remember!"

"But I will not be given up!" I cried, in a little passion of tears. "I will not be given up, De Grémont!"

Oh, the light that came into his eyes, the color that mounted to his cheek; and I knew then that I had sealed my fate and his. The next morning he was gone; he had wrung my hand at parting, and left a kiss upon it, and a tear—it is my marriage ring. Then my father—how he talked to me—he called me "unmaidenly" and "forward," and sent me to my room with fire in my heart and rebellion in my soul.

At twelve, when I came down to keep my appointment with Mr. Allston, he stood drawing on his gloves, waiting to accompany me. I knew what it meant; I was to be overlooked, watched. I am afraid I have a very bad heart, for I said to myself: "Is this love that my father feels for me, this selfish determination to force me into compliance?" Then I tried to remember how he had in many ways been very kind, and that he was my father and had a right to

treat me thus: but I could not *make* it right; the old rebellious heart kept on.

Arrived at Mr. Allston's, we found the door ajar and passed in: two or three persons stood with their backs toward us looking at a picture; and I heard one say:—

"It is the look of those who die young—a sudden, undecaying death!"

I stepped forward—they were standing before my portrait, absorbed in the contemplation. I glanced at Papa—he looked annoyed; and beyond feeling a little wicked pleasure that he had overheard this remark, I did not otherwise think of it. Afterwards, when I spoke of it to Mamma, she shuddered, and begged me not to think of such gloomy predictions. Somehow it does not trouble me at all—and I wonder, for I am a superstitious little thing. Ah, *mon dieu!* nothing troubles me now but one cruel fate; and death is better than separation surely.

I sat a long while to Mr. Allston; but at last he flung his brush down.

"I don't know why it is," he said, "but I cannot get that look from the eyes. . . ."

So we went home and left it, to my great relief, for I could think of nothing but the strange event of the morning.

For the next three days I do not think Papa had me out of his sight. On the morning of the fourth he called me into his study and told me something that turned me stone cold—that De Grémont had sailed for France. "I saw him last night," he went on, "when he intrusted me with this, which I told him I would give into your hands." I remembered it—a great seal ring which had been his father's: a new hope shot into my heart as I took it. The motto was, "*Attendre et veille*," rudely cut upon the shield of gold, and I remembered the old tradition that he had once related to me. The ring had been in the family since the time of Louis Quatorze; one of his ancestors had it made for a token—a token of his constancy when separated from the lady of his love—sending

it to her by a trusty servant. She understood its meaning, and watched and waited, filled with hope and faith.

I knew that he sent this ring to *me* for the same purpose, and *I* would wait and watch!

That very night, as I sat by the window after every one had gone to church but Mamma, I heard a low, fine whistle—the same tune, “My Nannie O!” He had not gone then; it was all a ruse—a solemn ruse; no simple cheat of cunning, for he is the best and bravest gentleman that ever lived—a sacred stratagem to overcome the force of might, not right. Mamma was in her room, and I was alone in the parlor; again the low, fine whistle, nearer yet, under my very window. I leaned out, I spoke softly:—

“I am here and alone; I will come out to you.”

I ran around by the currant path and met him—met him alone for the first time in three years. Oh, well I remember that parting in the garden of the château!—well I remember how he looked as he said, “When I am my own master, Nannie, I shall ask you of your father; but you will forget me ere then, perhaps.” And in all the three years, because I had no word or token, I thought *I* was forgotten instead. I little understood his sense of honor and delicacy.

And now he had asked my father the fatal question—fatal it had indeed proved; and here we met, the scions of the houses of De Grémont and Chastellux, in secrecy and trepidation.

He asked me to fly with him; he said, and my heart—ay, my conscience—tells me truly, that we have no right to sacrifice ourselves to unjust prejudice and force. He told me of the letter my grandmother had written to my father—a letter of approval, giving her consent, her benediction on our union. Ah, *mon Dieu*, what shall I do? . . .

Friday

I have decided; last night, while the guests were assembled at Governor Adams’, I stole out in my gauze dress to the old pine avenue, where I had appointed to meet him. He

was waiting for me. I put my hands in his; I said: "Armand, I will go with you—I am yours!"

He did not burst out into any extravagance of joy at this. He took it solemnly and still; for he feels with me that it is a sad and solemn thing we are to do. Solemnly and still, with hands clasping mine and eyes that grew misty with emotion, he looked down upon me and said: "God grant me grace to make your happiness, Nannie!"

Then it was arranged for our departure. On Saturday night at eleven a French vessel is to sail for Toulon. He knows the captain, the officers—they are friends, every one. There is a chaplain, too—the old chaplain of the château—who will marry us. All this time they have waited for us, the good, true people.

After this interview I had to go back to the gay rooms, to answer inquiries as to my absence, and play my part in the scene. The hours were endless. . . .

It is now seven o'clock; in three hours I go to meet thee, my beloved. Three hours, and I cut adrift from my father's house forever! Ah, will he curse me? He was never very soft, very gentle; but he must have loved me. . . . And my mother, my dear French mamma, she will not utterly hate me for this act. She has *merci*, she has *charité*. She loves her race—the people of France; she will have faith in me to the last. She knows I do not demean myself by an alliance with the house of De Grémont. And little John—God bless thee, little John!—thou lovest me, *mon frère*; and I, oh, Jean! Jean! I may never see thee again!

Ten minutes of the three hours gone. I will write to the last, and leave this poor brief record of my New England life behind me, a better explanation than I could now give for my flight. . . .

How slow the minutes creep! Yet ah, *mon Dieu*! each one hastens me forever from my father's house. My father's house! Tomorrow it will be all over. He will know what I have done, that I have fled from his roof and taken the actions of my life in my own hands! Tomorrow! Oh, my

Father, forgive me! See! I leave a kiss for you on this insensible page—a kiss and a tear; and Mother, my sweet French Mother, you will say a prayer for me each night, and I for thee shall never cease praying! And little Johnny, little Jean, I have thee in my heart, *mignon*; while it beats it will never turn cold to thee. Ah, Johnny, little Johnny, thou art all the child left now. Be brave and gentle, little Jean; and intercede for me, if hearts are hardened to me when I go. And Jean, when thou gettest to be a man, do not judge me harshly and by the world's judgment. Believe that I acted not hastily, but with calm consideration; and remember I loved thee, Jean, to the end! . . .

The wind is rising—how it sighs round the pines and maples! Ah, and there is lightning over the hills. A storm is coming down to us. Well, it is fit, my beloved, for this wild and troubled departure!

How the time goes! thoughts grow leaden, and I write but slowly as the hour approaches. Something tells me I shall never look upon thy face again, my Father, nor hear my Mother's voice, nor kiss the lips of little Jean. Never again! Perhaps this storm may find a shroud for us. Ah, how the eyes of the portrait flashed upon me then! They are unchanged, as he left them. "The look of those who die young"—Is this my fate? Am I going now to meet it? Well, I would not turn back. I go to meet it calmly. The time approaches—is now here. Farewell, Father, Mother, little Jean—I go with your images in my heart, and love for you for evermore in my soul. Again, *adieu*! . . .

In family archives and town records there is a story told of a fearful night in July, 1795, a night of storm, disastrous on sea and land. Many vessels went to pieces on the rocks and in the wild winds. Many sad stories were told of shipwreck and loss; but the saddest of them all was of the French ship *L'Espérance*. Not fifty miles from shore the storm burst upon her in its sudden fury, dismantling sails and driving her against the rocks, where one bolt of lightning finished

the work of destruction. Guns of distress, fired at short intervals, brought the citizens from their beds down to the harbor.

On that night, Judge M'Lean, contrary to his habit, was singularly wakeful and restless. He had retired early, as was his wont, and, waking after a brief slumber, heard the wind rising and souging round the pines and maples. A little later a door slammed with violence. How high the wind must be! did his wife hear it? he asked. Yes, she had heard it, too. Just then the dog howled beneath the window—a wild and mournful expression of dumb emotion. Then for a brief period there was a lull; the wind sank away, and the air grew still and brooding.

Slumber came again to the Judge, held him perhaps for an hour, when an awful crash, as if the heavens were rent asunder, awakened him. He started from his bed, flung on his dressing gown, lighted a candle, and looked out into the hall; he was not a nervous man, nor given to imaginings, but it seemed as if above the raving wind he heard the voice of his daughter Nannie, calling in dire distress. He listened—again through the wide old hall, and down the stairway once again, with tender supplication, the sweet young voice called, “Father!”

He waited no longer, but more rapidly than he had moved for many a day, strode on to her room. The door was open, a candle flaring low in the socket, and the bed unoccupied. Open upon the table lay the “Diary.” A few words, and he knew the truth. Yet her voice! Ah! she had repented at the eleventh hour and turned back. She was waiting at the door for pardon and admittance. He would give her both: and the great oaken door was unbarred for the penitent; but only the rain claimed admittance—the rain and the wind. In vain he shouted her name and waited for a reply. None came.

Suddenly the minute-gun boomed through the night: once and yet again; and once again, from afar, borne down it



seemed over sea and shore, that sweet, thrilling voice calling, "Father!"

Who may tell what strange, unusual promptings of the spirit stirred within that stern breast as out into the raging storm the Judge, obeying that call, took his way?

Only one boat crew dared put out on that tossing sea, and that, after the stirring appeals of one who did not belong to their number; and when they pushed off from shore, at the helm there he sat, eager and watchful and still—the old Judge. Returning, they brought the freight of death. Lashed together on a floating spar, hand clasped in hand, and tresses mingling, were the dead bodies of Armand de Grémont and Nannie Chastellux M'Lean. . . .

Long after, the sailors told how the stern old Judge sat rigid and motionless watching the pale, cold face of his dead daughter, and now and then saying softly, "Poor little Nannie!"

Long after, my father, the last of the old house of M'Lean, brought out of manifold wrappings the portrait of the Judge's daughter. The picture being stained in many places with mildew and must, he had it retouched. When the painter returned it, the wild, prophetic look that once baffled the unerring brush of Allston was no longer there; the painter of another age had sacrilegiously stricken it out.



## The Assignment





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## The Assignment \*

By MRS. CATHERINE R. WILLIAMS

IN one of the country towns of New England, distinguished by its bleak and barren aspect, its wide wastes of short grass that looked always scorched and crisped by the sun, its large pastures of stony ground where the sheep just existed upon the scanty herbage, and the bones of the cattle almost protruded through the skin, there lived a very remarkable man, whom we are about to describe. But first, we wish to give some little account of the nook where this character sheltered himself. . . .

If the air of romance that really distinguished that little spot was the result of the occupant's taste, we might truly look for something quite refined in the mind of the projector, but unfortunately that was not the case with Mr. Crispin. We must say that his poverty, and not his will, consented to a residence in a spot where he considered his sphere of action as much too contracted for such a man.

\* Williams, *Annals of the Aristocracy*. Providence, 1845.

The entrance to his farm was from the great road, through a pair of bars into a rocky pasture, which at this side was bordered by a swampy piece of ground where alder and wild poplar were the only kinds of shrubbery that flourished. The crooked cartpath, where you alternately floundered through the mud, or encountered rocks that of those days would upset an omnibus but which the damsels made no scruple to travel in the darkest nights, on the backs of their sure-footed nags, whenever a quilting, husking, or any such jollification called them out, led, after many a romantic turn, into another pasture, where vegetation began to smile; for here, on a gentle rising ground, there opened one of the wildest and most picturesque scenes of rural beauty the eye ever dwelt on.

On one side was a fine orchard, enclosed by a low wall, and behind it, sheltering it and the valley below completely from the north wind, rose a rocky precipice, which, towering some hundred feet, disclosed in beautiful openings through the rocks the dark green pine, and that most lovely of forest trees, the red ash; below you, on the right, lay a strip of intervalle of a semicircular form, and below that a dark, dense woody swamp. In skirting the orchard, after winding half of a circle, you came suddenly upon a little cottage almost hid by the surrounding shrubbery, and wild grapevines clambered the roof and hung in clusters over the windows, while an enormous pear tree stretched its branches over that, and a little grove of peach trees completed the ornaments; these extended quite to the base of the precipitous hill that rose high beyond. Altogether it was one of the most lovely spots we have ever seen, and its charms were enhanced by being in the midst of a wild and sterile country.

But Crispin was not made for a farmer; the worthy family who had leased it to him soon saw that, and fearing the land would run out in such hands, after the first year took the farm again into their own hands, permitting him to occupy the cottage and cultivate the garden. There was a little room running out on one end, called a shop, and in

this Crispin plied his trade, which was that of a shoemaker, from morning till night. Go when you would, during the first years of his residence there, you might hear his hammer tap, tap, tap.

These were Crispin's happiest days; and had he never become acquainted at the tavern, which was about half a mile off, across lots, he might have been a better man, living and dying in innocent and contented seclusion and rural plenty; but this was not to be. Crispin, by disposition, was a great, good-natured, simple creature, but his faculties once stimulated by ardent spirits, he imagined himself one of the wisest and greatest men in the nation; and his misery at not being respected according to his merits was at times equal to his exultation at the discovery of his pretensions.

Unhappily for poor Crispin, his wife was by nature a sloven, and she inherited a love for strong drink, which the utter impossibility of indulging had alone restrained; and now that Crispin not only drank himself but plentifully supplied his house, the temptation was irresistible. The consequence was, increased untidiness in her house, neglect of her household duties and her children.

The world in general appears profoundly ignorant of the mystery of drunkenness, and does not know there are just two sorts of people born into the world: those that have a natural inclination to strong drink, and those who have not. Now, the boundless stores of creation have not been sufficient to satisfy the raging thirst of the former; and the latter, no habit, no temptation whatever, can ever make drunkards. After all that has been said on the subject, the whole truth resolves itself into this: Crispin and his wife both had the hereditary distemper.

There was a sister of Mrs. Crispin, who opportunely came to reside with her just at this time, and who was entirely free from the family complaint; and let it be recorded of her, as it was the only virtue she had, we were going to say, except one; for although scandal was busy with her fame, even as respected her sister's husband, yet we give it as our

unqualified opinion, that she was entirely innocent of all such offenses, unless she had some blind beau, for of all the women that nature ever formed, she was the ugliest. It was positively impossible to look on her without a cold shudder, and well would the urchins of that day remember the close relationship of her look and temper; for the neighborhood at that time being destitute of a school, the redoubtable Tabithy offered, and was accepted, as a teacher.

Where the children came from in that wild region seemed at first a mystery; but the rocks and swamps poured out their juvenile population, and the school was filled. And now commenced such a reign of terror as scarce ever was known, even in those days when people seriously believed learning was whipped in. Oh, the ferrules and birches that were used up in that little dilapidated, no-colored school-house that stood on the high road, just over against the white *birch wood*. It was well there was one so near, though we presume the scholars did not think it so. Had their tears—poor little urchins!—been bottled, what a quantity would have been preserved. And such was the terror this she-dragon inspired that not one in twenty dared to complain at home, and their parents thought all was going on right, while there was not a night that some scores of them were not detained to be shook, and beat, and pinched by this demon of a woman. Many—old people now—were the subjects of her brutality. We have heard them wish that she might be chased through hell, to all eternity, with whips and scourges.

The entrance of the schoolmistress made no alteration in the family of Crispin, whose downward course went gradually on, until the most deplorable poverty stared them in the face. The sound of the hammer on the last was now seldom heard after dinner. He would sometimes of a morning manage to cobble up a pair of shoes, just to keep him in spending money. After dinner he would be off, and generally, by night, stagger home with a well-filled jug in his

pocket, of which his better half never failed to partake largely.

The poor children now had to go to school with heads uncombed, and often with faces unwashed. Poor little white-headed, shivering creatures, though they were rugged as bears the cold winters used to nip them sadly. A circumstance once occurred that came very near sobering Crispin and his wife for a time, but hearing somebody say that "people in trouble could not help drinking"—a figure of speech often used, and for which the tongue that utters it ought to be blistered—they immediately flew to the bottle again for comfort, and the result was like a relapse in a fever: the last attack was more violent than the first.

The lesson that Providence sent them was the death of one of their boys, and a death so shocking as to call forth the sympathies of all the benevolent for many miles around. The unfortunate child had on that day been sent to the tavern for the usual quota of ardent spirits, the father being unable, from a sprain in the foot, to go himself. By great assiduity the father had managed to make a path through the swamp described, in front of his house, as it was a much nearer way to the tavern, and had the advantage of being more out of sight than the ordinary route; and although intemperance was not then such a disgrace as at the present day, yet there was a something within that must have whispered, "Shame!" for Crispin always skulked whenever he entered the rum depot, and he had labored indefatigably to tread down the turf for a foothold through this dangerous place, for it abounded with pits and mudholes all the way.

The child, who had often followed his father through, knew the way well; and he went hopping and skipping away in much glee; but it was a dark and cloudy afternoon in November, and everything presaged a snowstorm.

Unfortunately, the precious liquid was out at the tavern, and they had sent to the next market town, some ten miles, for a fresh supply. The poor child, therefore, was obliged to wait, as the return wagon was momentarily expected.



Seating himself in the chimney corner, the little fellow was apparently much amused with the chat of the drovers, who, seeing the storm approaching, had halted for the night.

Darkness came on prematurely, and before the child was aware. It came also accompanied with a tedious snowstorm. The child, who had just received his liquor, thinking probably it was very far round by the road and that he should be shielded partially by the trees in passing across through the swamp, returned the way he came. Beginning to be anxious as the night approached, the father walked down to meet him; when about half-way through, he plainly distinguished a cry of distress, but, perplexed by the increasing tempest and darkness, probably took a wrong direction and missed the boy. However, he continued on until he came to the tavern, suffering much, no doubt, from his lameness, and occasionally hallooing to know if he was near him. All were in astonishment at the public house, thinking the boy must have had time to get home before the father started, but comforted him by saying he must have gone round the road. However, they were soon set to right by a lad who had seen the boy enter the swamp.

By this time the alarm was general, and every traveler at the inn volunteered to assist the unhappy father in exploring the swamp. Taking with them a number of lanterns they set out, and after several hours' search the hat was found, and soon after the body of the child was dragged from one of the deep mudholes in its neighborhood. One hand was clasping a twig, which he had seized in falling, and the other grasped the fatal jug.

Oh, who that had a soul to feel, could ever have tasted a drop of the infernal drugs after such a scene as this! Yet the ways of Providence are dark and intricate. . . .

The grief of the parents was violent, the mother screamed so she could be heard a mile, and tore out handfuls of her hair; while the father bemoaned himself as having lost the best child he had, and as being the cause of his death, in permitting him to go so far, so near night. But it did not

seem to have entered the heads of either that the very errand they sent him on constituted their greatest offense, though they both protested they never could bear the taste of liquor again, "because the poor little fellow died with the jug in his hand." But chancing to hear some of the neighbors say that "it was quite natural that people should drink hard when they were in trouble," and so forth and so forth—they immediately sought the consolation thus indirectly *recommended*; and before the funeral, Crispin and his wife drew largely upon this comfort, in time of trouble. . . .

Often in after times would Crispin mourn that little Edward was all the consolation he had in this world; that he was the only child that was willing to take a social glass with his father, and the only one who was *willing to buy it*. That was true, and explains the reason why his death was a merciful dispensation. That child alone, of all the children of Crispin, inherited the love of strong drink; had he lived, he must inevitably have been ruined soon. The others, though born in the midst of it, fed in infancy with it, and tempted in more mature life, never became drunkards, and always refused to buy it, if possible. . . .

But a new source of affliction soon opened to the father. Soon after the death of little Edward, the swamp began to be haunted—that is, the nightly company at the Inn began to find it a very convenient place to cut capers in; and groans and cries and many sorts of noises forthwith began to be heard nights from this dreary place.

Crispin pretended he was compelled to move, on account of the noises: but the truth was, the proprietors of the house became dissatisfied with their tenant, and Crispin, who had lived in this spot ever since the commencement of his wedded life, was compelled to take up his awls and march; and such was now his character for making payments that no respectable man was willing to let him a house. Consequently he was obliged to take up with a miserable hut, at what was called the snake den, a most dismal-looking place, though much nearer the high road than the former. And now one

almost fancies they see him reading off lectures to his boys. He was wonderfully eloquent whenever he had just as much liquor as he could get along with. And then you might go at almost any hour of the day, and find the house unswept, the table standing in the middle of the room, covered with dirty dishes and scraps of food, the children straggling about slipshod or barefoot, and their mother either gossiping about the country or sitting down in the midst of this filth, chatting with somebody as miserable as herself—for in a town there are always more than one of her description—or quarreling with the “old man,” as she called him.

But of all the edifying scenes at Crispin’s, when he gave his lectures was the richest. He never commenced one of these, except after he had “got up steam,” as the Crispins of this day would call it. At those seasons he was very positive and dogmatical, and his boys were uniformly called in to listen, and get, as he said, edification.

Seated on his bench with his hammer in one hand and his taps in the other, he would go on, much in this wise:

“My sons, you are not to suppose you are always to be buried up alive here. (Hiccup.) Such a forlorn place as this is no home for a man of genius.

“Hand me that awl, Joe. I intend sometime or other to move to the seaboard, where there is room for exercise of great talents like mine. (Hiccup.)

“Ben, pass me that piece of wax. This everlasting tap—tap—tapping is beneath a man of my parts. I don’t mean to sit down by it much longer; and when we get to a seaport, I’ll show ’em what I’m made of.

“Hand me a gourd of water, Jim. Yes, I’ll let ’em know what talent is. But first, I have a lesson for you all.

“Attention! Look at me, Joe.”

“Jim, throw down them marbles.”

“Charley, you and Ben give me your attention.”

“I say (hiccup) well remember, my boys, this world is no place for an honest man. Nothing but money passes current, and you must git money somehow.”

"How shall we get hold of it, daddy?" asked Ben; "that's the thing."

"Well, that I'm going to tell ye. You must marry rich in the first place. Get a good suit of clothes by hook or by crook, and you'll look well enough (this was true), and then go a courting. If the gal refuses, never mind, keep teasing her: she will consent when her patience is worn out."

"But how to get the clothes, daddy?" eagerly asked Charley.

"Oh, that you must contrive. There was four brothers went from my neighborhood some years ago, and they had but one Sunday suit between them, and they all courted rich gals on different nights and took turns wearing the clothes, though they came plaguy near being found out once. There was a pesky old maid, just like your Aunt Tabithy—whom I wish the old adversary had fast hold of. (Jim, reach me that waxed end.) And she, you see, was loping, spying out wonders; and John, the oldest, had just gone up garret to dress himself, and behold, the Sunday shirt was missing; and he began hallooing from the top of the ladder—(you must always look down first)—'Mother, where's the shirt?' and his mother tried to wink at him, but being cross-eyed she made a bad piece of work of it, and John he kept hallooing, not seeing the tarnal old maid.

"'I say, I want the shirt; it's my turn, and I will have it;' and there sat this old tabby shaking her sides, till the old woman crept up the ladder and stopped him.

"Well, I guess it got out," said Jim.

"Well, and what think they did? Why, instead of lying and brazing it out, the fools hung their heads and stayed at home, and one lost his gal by it. But never mind, they pulled foot and got up again, and now they're aristocracy."

"Ari—what, daddy—what's that?"

"Why—why, it's somehow being at the top of things. It means living aboveboard; putting on a stiff upper lip and keeping your wulger acquaintance at a distance, and being quality."

"Quality—what's that, daddy?" says Charley.

"Well, it means being amongst great folks, and no other, and keeping servants, and inviting folks to dinner that have enough to eat at home, and never asking anybody that is hungry—that would be wulger: they'd set you down at once for a nobody—and it means never to speak to a poor person in the street, unless it is to hand over some change, or do something in that way, that folks may know they are no 'quaintance. Well, and then after you have made such a good beginning, you must get rich."

"How, daddy?"

"Why, you must get everybody to trust you that you can, and if money should rain down upon you, you can pay them, you know; but if not, you must pay by contrivance."

"How, daddy?"

"Why, run in debt to one to pay another, and if that fails, let the law pay it; ha, ha, ha, do you understand that, boys?"

It cannot be supposed that with such training, Crispin's boys were a hopeful set. It is much to be doubted whether they would ever have been placed in a situation to carry out the instructions of the father, if it had not been for an accident that shortly befell the family, by which the children were thrown upon the world, and, each being obliged to shift for himself, set all their wits at work.

The present habitation of Crispin was, as we before observed, in a most forlorn spot. The little unfinished, and we may add, unfurnished cottage they inhabited, was placed just at a sudden turn in the road, with a dense forest behind it, and the darkest and gloomiest-looking wood you ever saw; which was rendered still more so by the inequality of the ground, which alternately rose in sharp acclivities or sank into deep pits.

"Rattlesnake Den," a little beyond this spot, was a hideous place indeed, and as it was really and truly a famous abode of those reptiles, it was surprising anyone would consent to live near it. A few miserable beings, however, tilled the

patches of earth among the rocks, and with these persons the wife of Crispin had formed an acquaintance, and as she dared not at any time take the shortest cut through the haunted wood to their houses, she usually climbed a rocky hill, so steep on both sides that one had to walk with exemplary caution to keep a footing.

We have said that Crispin's wife loved a little, as the vulgar saying is, of what her husband loved a great deal. This was literally true, for it took but little to upset poor Susan, while her husband would weather the Cape with more lining to his jacket than half a dozen ordinary men could stagger under.

The poor woman, having just enough to know her situation, was half a mind to try the path through the woods in returning one day at sunset from a ramble to this neighborhood, but superstition conquered her prudence, and she dared the steep and rocky eminence, and climbed it in safety; but in descending it on the other side she fell, and struck her head so badly on a rock that she was insensible when taken up. Two men returning from a day's work chanced to find her, and they kindly took her up and bore her in their arms to her husband's habitation. She lingered some time, but never regained her senses and died from the effect of her wounds.

The poor, stupefied children gazed with dumb amazement upon the remains of their departed mother. Nor had they time to recover from the strange shock they had received, before their father contrived a greater one by bringing home, one night, a stepmother—even the redoubtable Tabithy—the terror of all the children far and near, and the perfect abhorrence of her sister's children.

This virago had of late absented herself much from the family, and had procured her board in the different districts where she had still been admitted as a teacher. Fear of being without bread had taught her prudence; and of late her thirst for infant blood and tears had either abated, or was wisely restrained. In plain English, her character had



improved, though her heart, it appeared, was still as depraved as ever. She professed her desire to live in single blessedness, and to have no wish to change her condition. Great, then, was the astonishment of the neighborhood when they heard of this marriage.

The new housekeeper turned over a new leaf. The abode of Crispin was no longer that of squalid misery. The old house underwent a thorough cleansing and clearing, and mops and brooms became the order of the day. Crispin, himself, and his boys, were *smarted up*, and every jug of liquor brought into the house was immediately chucked out the window.

Tabithy ruled despotic as a bashaw; but, notwithstanding this, she was an object of supreme hatred to the juvenile part of the family. She dared not, now that they had grown so large, correct them with corporal chastisement; but her tongue was the sting of the scorpion and the bite of the viper, and beside, they had not forgotten her former cruelties. The groans and cries of her victims still rang in their ears, and they could not disguise their detestation of their new mother, even before their father, until the old man was compelled to give a reluctant consent to part with four of them. The youngest, Charley, only remained. He would have preferred placing them in the country, where he could see to them; but his former discourses had sunk too deep in their hearts, and each and all insisted upon going to the seaboard.

Three of them wended their way with varied success from the workshop to a competency, without, however, having a remarkable character for honesty—what finally became of them cannot now be ascertained—but the oldest was a remarkable person. By the help of great art and wonderful tact he succeeded in gaining the confidence of a gentleman in whose house he was placed, who gave him an education, and in reward he gained the affection of his daughter; and she, being heir to a fortune, married him. She died, however, without coming into possession of her property; and



he made another attempt. His new father-in-law, however, became a bankrupt, and he lost the chance of making a fortune by marriage.

This last misfortune did not take place, it is presumed, before he became acquainted with the art and mystery of making a property out of nothing. . . .

This oldest son, whom we shall call Gid, was a very ingenious fellow. Why nature gave him such a face nobody can tell, but we rather think practice, as much as anything, enabled him to put on such an innocent look. His face was almost a picture of innocence, and then he was such a sober fellow; it was a great advantage to him.

It was not long after Gid commenced his establishment as a housekeeper before he perceived something must be done more than common. To do him justice, he commenced life tolerably honest, and had he been satisfied to live as the middling class of people live, he might have continued so, but his ambition, constantly provoked by his lady wife and the early counsels he had received, continually incited him to attempt something by which he might realize a speedy fortune and mingle with a set of people whom he denominated the Aristocracy.

At first, when his wife proposed a state of living unsuitable to their circumstances, he rather checked her by saying, he "had nothing to support it with." And when she urged the manner in which she had been accustomed to live, and the society she had associated with, Gid very laconically answered:

"Yes, but it made you all bankrupts."

"And what of that?" said Mrs. Crispin; "who's any worse off for being so? Did you ever know anybody here, any poorer for a failure in business, or less respected?—unless, indeed, it was some poor, mean-spirited creature, that was fool enough to be mortified about it: or somebody that knew so little as to give up every cent and sit down penniless himself; or, some miserable little huckster that failed for twenty or thirty dollars. Your great bankrupts that make

a sweep are never worse off, and they generally go right into splendid business again."

Methinks I see poor Gid, with his hands in his coat pocket, walking his pretty little garden and soliloquizing with his head bent down on his breast, as was his usual practice when anything troubled him.

"Well, I don't know; something must be done, and as my father used to say, 'Gid, never stop at trifles; you have genius, and the world owes you a good living, my boy'; and then he would say 'this world was no place for an honest man.'

"My father was a knowing one; he showed as much judgment as most men—bating his marriage with Tabithy. . . . His counsel was, 'Get money, get money honestly if you can, but get it at all events'—and another thing he said, 'Borrow of one, and pay to another.'—That was a good plan, though by no means original.

"There's my neighbor, Jim Squander, has lived in that same way these twenty years at least; why, he and his family were as poor as Job's turkey—that is to say, as poor as we were—and somehow, by hook or by crook, Jim has managed to keep servants, and houses and what not, and give dinners to the aristocracy, and attend balls and parties, and patronize the theater, and ride over the heads of the vulgar poor, and all that, and to my certain knowledge he never was worth one dollar in his life, at any time, if his debts were paid; all he holds would not pay them; but what cares he? On election days he can bring as many men into the field, and more than an *honest man could*, for with him it is, *vote or starve*, and here's your ticket.

"I have always envied Jim.

"There's Joe Swartout, too. Only to think how he began life! His father was an honest blacksmith—a hard-fisted and rather a hard-hearted man; that is, he was one of them kind of men that lives for themselves alone; he always performed his contracts, but he would run from a cry of distress, quick as any other; for said he, 'Joe, boy, it is easier

getting into trouble than getting out.' But the old fellow did his work well and was very industrious; but never a job could he put upon Joe. He tried to learn him the trade, but it would not work. Joe did not like to black his hands.

"Never shall I forget a scrap he had once, to make Joe shoe a horse; my conscience, how he pommelled him! Well, Joe beat him out, and got behind a counter, and there, being a slick lad, he hopped round among the ribbons and lace to kill. And he would bow and bend his pliant body so gracefully, the ladies all liked him, and used to call him handsome Joseph. So he commenced merchant, and after some half dozen bankruptcies, became a great man.

"There's Gen. Burgomaster, too, a poor kitchen boy once—what a dash he cuts! He has been off somewhere, and they say, owes all he is worth and more, in tother country. The day of reckoning must come, some time or another, but that does not trouble him; he has his dinners, drinks his wine, and drives his span, with the best of them.

"Why can't I contrive up something of the sort? My father, now, if he was here, he did not know much about trade, poor man, but he could cheat, and did, too; both in upper and under leather."

"Sam," said Gid, upon one of these occasions when he had been cudgeling his brains for examples of making rapid fortunes, "Sam, I say, how was it that Dick and Bill Lutestring used to manage about their assignments, when they were making their fortunes?"

This Sam was a neighbor, a great fat, bluff fellow, full of fun and nonsense, most cutting and caustic in his remarks upon others, and none too honest himself; he might have made up the story he told, likely as not, for he was much addicted to invention, or as the phrase is, when speaking of *gentlemen*, he was rather imaginative. Yet, being a rogue himself, he had, too, a remarkable tact in finding out rogues; so he might have told the truth. His story runs thus:

Dick and Bill Lutestring had tried almost all ways of getting rich, for what purpose I cannot tell, unless it was for

the pleasure of hoarding up money; ambition they had none, or they might have made a most magnificent appearance. They had been traders in the West India line, and had watered the rum and sanded the sugar, and mealed the ginger and mustard, and pounded brick for their coffee, and sold Upon tea for Bohea, and reduced the molasses, and in fine done everything in that line except sell wooden nutmegs—the art of which had not then been discovered—but all would not do; they could not grow rich fast enough; so finally, they contrived a new plan.

They discovered, all at once, it was cheaper to build than live in a hired tenement, and to building they went. They bought two lots adjoining one another, and put up their houses and stores, and each commenced business on his own hook; and their stores were soon filled with the newest and best goods. Every wholesale dealer wanted to supply Dick and Bill Lutestring; such *nice young men*, so prudent and industrious, already so forehanded; and they were supplied and plentifully, too. They traded largely; there was no difficulty about endorsers, either. They had an estate, a fashionable and handsome house, unencumbered, and so forth and so forth. Well, they went on, and prospered for a time, living at fountain head, but not making sufficient parade to excite alarm among their creditors.

But one morning, Dick or Bill—I don't precisely recollect which—excited considerable stir in the neighborhood by having his shop doors and windows closed up.

The good neighbors conceived something must have happened, and were very fearful that Neighbor Lutestring or his wife, or both, was dead. Some thought they had been murdered in their beds, and some, that they had died with some terrible malady that by a singular Providence had seized them all at once. Ridiculous as this last surmise was, it gained some credit from the circumstance of lights being seen there until a late hour; and the watch deposed they had seen lights, even in the cellars, at midnight, and came very near giving an alarm of fire; but they discovered they

were moving ones. In vain they inquired at the other brother's; the man was from home, they said, and the females could not explain the mystery.

At length, when curiosity and alarm had reached its height, and they were on the point of forcing an entrance and had brought a crowbar and other implements for the purpose, Dick or Bill—whichever it was—put his head out of a window and said, they need not trouble themselves, as he “had only *made an Assignment*.”

Here Sam had to stop, while Gid put his hands to his sides and indulged in one long and hearty peal of laughter. After somewhat regaining his sobriety, and wiping away the tears, Sam proceeded:

“Never was a set of people so utterly confounded; there they stood with open mouths, gazing upon one another in speechless astonishment. Some of them did not know what the word meant; and thought it was some word synonymous with exit, but as the man himself was there, they could not comprehend the business.

“At length a general screwing of faces, and a sort of half-stifled tittering, told the story; and within a few hours it was known, from the long wharf to the burial ground, that Dick Lutestring had failed to the tune of fifty thousand dollars, and had made over all his estate, real and personal, for the benefit of his creditors.”

“That was very handsome in him, for he had such a fine store of goods, after all, they would not lose much,” said Gid.

But lo, and behold; when the store came to be examined, there was little but a beggarly account of empty boxes, the goods having taken their flight altogether. There was much grumbling certainly, and Dick condescended to explain to the appraisers, “bad times, bad bargains, hard raising money; and therefore boxes, and so forth, could not be replenished; though,” he said, “hopes of some lucky turn had prompted him to keep up appearances as long as practicable,” and therefore the deception.

Very loath, indeed, were the creditors to sign off, but at length, finding if they did not they must lose all, they consented, particularly as the wife very kindly consented to give up her third and make herself a beggar as she said, to give them all in her power.

Matters were settled at last, and the unfortunate couple left houseless; but having rich relations, they did not despair. The other brother lamented his brother's want of prudence and caution very feelingly, and to the continual demands which began to pour in upon him, in consequence of the delinquency of the other, he opposed nothing but prompt payment, though he had lost, he said, very considerably by the failure himself.

Suspicion once completely put to rest, Bill, for I think he was the survivor, launched out, and increased his business mightily.

Dick's rich relations and his wife's were very kind to him; they became responsible for the rent of the house, and in a small way set him up in business again, or at least he said they did, and one very remarkable circumstance was, they supplied him with some pieces of goods so exactly like some of the missing articles, that but for his being an honest man, one might have supposed them the very same.

Time passed on, and Bill's trade continued to flourish and expand, while Dick kept on in his little way, calling himself very poor, and looking meek as Moses. He would frequently ostentatiously purchase a three-cent loaf of bread and a red herring for breakfast; saying, "once he could afford a steak or some oysters, but now, times were changed," and accompany the declaration with such a beseeching look, as to disarm the resentment of many an angry creditor who had been previously swearing about the loss of his money.

Everyone wondered how the brothers came to be so different; the one so smart, careful and prudent in living, the other scarcely capable of taking care of himself.

Nothing could exceed the confidence they placed in the elder brother; his having stood the shock of the bankruptcy



of the younger and meeting his payments with such promptness, had at once laid all suspicion instead of arousing it. If they had once reflected upon the circumstance of a young man, so lately entered business for himself, getting trust for so much—borrowing money and building an expensive house, being able in a moment, without any trouble, to hand out such sums, they must have suspected something. The honest appearance of poverty alarms people—but let a man only appear to have plenty of money, and they think all is well.

“However,” said Sam, “don’t let me get before my story.”

It chanced that immediately opposite to Dick’s residence there was a tenement, occupied by one of those remarkable women who are born once in a thousand years with an irresistible propensity to find out everybody’s business. Such was the raging desire of Mrs. Knowall to find out the affairs of the neighborhood, that often of a dark and even stormy evening, she would sally out to see what was going on in the different houses in the street.

She was not a mischief-making woman, but a kind, friendly and good sort of woman in the main; but the restless desire to know everybody’s business was probably from want of employment. She had no taste for many of the amusements of life; none of its dissipations, and people, you know, must be about something. One of her greatest gratifications was to sit at her window of a moonlight evening, after darkening her room, and see the transactions going on in the neighborhood—it constituted one of her highest pleasures.

Sometimes she would put out her light and sit long after midnight, and no traveler passed up or down without her straining her sight to discover how far he went, what house he entered, and how long he stayed.

It so chanced that on the night of which I am about to speak, Mrs. Knowall had blown out her light and taken her accustomed seat at her window, to watch the neighbors; and about midnight, what should she see but Neighbor Lutestring putting his head out of the shop door, and carefully surveying the premises, up street and down. Such an odd maneuver,



at that hour, might well arrest the attention of a woman less inquisitive than Mrs. Knowall, whose curiosity was wound up to the highest notch.

Well, having, I suppose, ascertained to his satisfaction that the coast was clear, he dodged in again, and presently she saw him emerge with a large package, big as he could lift, and skip across to his brother's house, from which he took another survey and dodged back again, after having deposited his bundle. Presently the other performed the same maneuver, and returned with a tremendous package. Again the premises were reconnoitered, and the two brothers came out together, bearing a package of large dimensions between them.

This was repeated several times, until it grew toward day; then she could see the lights dodging the cellars in such a manner as to convince her of what she nor no one else ever before suspected—that there was a private communication under ground.

Day at length began to dawn, when fatigued and sleepy she retired to her pillow—though for some time she was unable to sleep. The well-remembered misfortune of Dick, some years before, was not forgotten, and she formed her own conclusions. Nor was she far from the truth, for on awakening at a late hour, she found the opposite shop door closed and a number of people gathered round, talking of it and shaking their heads, and rolling up their eyes very significantly.

It was too true, there was another *Assignment*, and now the great gun of the family had fired off. The biggest man in the neighborhood; the greatest merchant; the most trustworthy—and what was of more consequence, the Aristocracy—had exploded and blown to pieces.

"Well, and did she blow 'em?" said Gid.

"Yes," said Sam, "but not before every creditor had signed off, and the whole thing was settled: and then she whispered the story round among her friends. Had the story been about one of the vulgar it would have been eagerly

seized; but implicating as it did, one of the Aristocracy of the place, it was smothered and died away."

"What became of them, after?" demanded Gid.

"Why," said Sam, "they went on playing into each other's hands, though in a little different manner, until, after being unable to cheat the public, they had recourse to cheating one another. The last one that failed lost all, and died broken-hearted, while the other suddenly became rich again. But his last stratagem for making money exceeded all the rest, and set all the rest of his maneuvers in the background." . . .

"What was it?" demanded Gid. "Did he sweat the banks?"

"Sweat the D——l," said Sam. "Why, man, if he had robbed every bank from Maine to Georgia, from the Aroostick to the Rio Del Norte, it would have been children's play, compared to it."

"But stop," said Sam, "it is not best for certain folks to know too much (winking significantly) and people might take advantage of it. And if all rogues knew of such an invention, I don't know where there would be safety. A man would have to hold his hair on every time he went out; not for fear the wind would blow it off, but to prevent being shaved." And in spite of all the entreaties of Gid, Sam went off persisting in his resolution not to reveal the last maneuver of the Lutestrings.

Imagine yourself, dear reader, in one of the Halls of the Great—one of the Parlors of the Aristocracy, of a cold December night, when the wind howled in the chimneys, and driving sleet and snow through every cranny, even in the well-built houses of the rich, gave evidence of what it was doing in the hovels of the poor. God be thanked, we have no thatch-roofed, mud-walled cabins in this our favored land! (How highly favored, one who has never gone abroad cannot realize.)

The room where we introduced you was carpeted with the finest Brussels—the chairs of mahogany, of the neatest

fashion of those days, and the tables or slabs surmounted with pier-glasses. The immense windows were protected with lattices without, and damask curtains within, and a highly finished grate was glowing with coals in the fireplace, in front of which reclined, on a rich crimson sofa, the mistress of the mansion, a lady in the prime of life, most elaborately dressed for an evening at home. Her gown was of the richest black satin, with costly trimmings; a collar of Brussels lace enclosed her plump neck, and her straight black hair was braided, and confined with a gold comb. A diamond pin at her collar, and cable chain to her watch, completed the ornaments, with the exception of some half dozen rings and a bracelet. This lady was Mrs. Crispin, Junior, and the era, a few years subsequent to Sam's story.

A servant came in, and laid the table with much ceremony. Presently a pale little girl, about ten years of age, appeared with some knitting work.

"Well, Betsey," said Mrs. Crispin, "have you rocked the baby to sleep?" (The baby was three years old.)

"Yes, ma'am," said the child, shivering more from fear than cold.

"And is the room quite warm?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And did he go to sleep without crying, poor little dear?"

"No, ma'am; he cried a long time."

"And you let him, you hussy!"

"Indeed, ma'am, I could not help it. He beat me, and pulled out whole handfuls of my hair."

"Pooh!" said the lady, "a mere flea bite; the child is not well. But Betsey, did you clean all your knives this afternoon?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Did you rub all those brasses?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Did you go for milk?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Did you wipe the dishes for the cook?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you carried up fuel for the night to the nursery?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And coal for the grate in my chamber?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you washed down the back stairs, today?"

"Yes, ma'am, though the water froze faster than I could wash them."

"Then it will do no good, you must wash them again tomorrow. And have you washed Charles and Mary, and put them to bed?—Then take your knitting work, and sit down to work upon your stocking. There, mind, don't spoil it; keep your eyes upon your work; what is it to you, who is coming in?"

The door opened, and Mr. Gideon Crispin made his appearance.

The figure and dimensions of our hero had a little increased, since a few years ago when we left him with Sam, in the garden. He was now a portly looking man of middle age, of a firm step and ruddy countenance—such a one as bespoke good living. Yet there was a careworn look about him; an air of perplexity, a quick and fitful start, at times, as though an adder stung him—and that habit of long and labored breathing that shows a heart but ill at ease, and marked the man whom the Scriptures describe as he *who is in haste to grow rich*.

On this evening, however, there was a look of exultation about him, rather different from common; and the smile that occasionally flitted across his still handsome face proclaimed he had that day made a bargain. There was no time to proclaim it now, for they wisely never talked over their business before servants. A woman tended the table, and the little girl on the cricket still plied her knitting needles.

"It is intensely cold," remarked Mr. Crispin, "and storms badly."

"Yes," said his lady, "and a terrible time for beggars. No less than five have been here today."

"Possible! Well, I hope you showed them the door."

"Dolly did, I believe. I did not see but two of them."

"And who were they, pray, that intruded into your presence?"

"Why, one was a young girl soliciting sewing, to keep together a family of children, her father being sick and her mother dead. But I advised her to put the children out in families, and let her father go to the asylum; for you know there are such comfortable quarters there, and they live so beautifully, and children are so much better off in folks' kitchens, like our Betsey here, who lives so well and is so happy."

Betsey happened to be in the room.

"Well, what did she say?" demanded Gid, rather posed by his wife's last assertion.

"Say!—why, she looked at Betsey and shrugged her shoulders, and then 'hoped she never should be such an unnatural daughter as to send her father to the *workhouse*, to be turned in with black and white and obliged to associate with the vilest of creation.'

"Did you ever hear the like? As though anybody could be viler than to be poor as death! I told her we did not wish to hear any reflections upon the colored people. We were Abolitionists; and if her father was poor, he was no better than they were; and it was very wicked in her to make any such remarks."

The last part of the speech was unheard by Gid, who at that moment saw his father and mother in vision—the little hut at the corner of the wood, with all its poverty and wretchedness, rose up, as it were, before him; and the times when he himself had cried for a piece of bread and butter, and cried in vain, were not forgotten. Recovering himself, he then inquired—

"And who was the other beggar?"

"A stranger lady, who was getting subscribers for a little book she was publishing; and who, I am told, being a well-

educated woman, has taken this method to support herself and one child."

"And do you call that begging?"

"Yes, I call all subscriptions so—don't you?"

"That depends upon whether you are to have the worth of your money."

"Yes, but I hate subscriptions," said the wife; "and I told her so, and asked why she could not put her books in a shop, and let them that wanted, go and buy."

"She said, printers and binders were generally poor people, and they needed their pay as soon as earned, and if a book was ever so meritorious, it might sometimes lay a great while before it was sold, and she made a point of securing sufficient to pay every expense immediately, and she would then find no difficulty in the remainder.

"I told her we were overrun with books—that the world was full of them, and I did not see the use of printing any more. She smiled, and said the progress of knowledge must not stop because there were many books in the world. I then told her, on purpose to make her angry—for you know I hate literary women—that I had but little to give, and what I had, I preferred to bestow in some other way.

"She rose to go, then; saying, very pleasantly, that this was not meant as a call on my benevolence, but merely as an attempt to sell an article which everyone was at liberty to purchase or reject, as they would any other merchandise; that she meant to make it worth the money, and trusted that no one would feel that they were cheated in the bargain."

"'But, madam,' said I, 'Mrs. Doehead, who has read one of your works, tells me it was quite unintelligible to her.'

"'I know it,' she said; 'she is the only one, though; and it is expecting too much of one to write a book, and find people with sense to understand it.'

"I had a great mind to have it, then, I was so pleased, for you know Mrs. Doehead is half a fool—but I had not time, for she made her adieus then, with the air of a duchess."

"And was she vexed?" said Gid.



"By no means," said Mrs. Crispin, "her good humor was imperturbable, and I would have signed, but I saw two or three of the neighbors had, so I mean to borrow it of them."

"That was wise," said Gid, swallowing down something that seemed to choke him; "but send out these tea things, and this child to bed," looking at Betsey, "I want to talk of our own affairs."

The table was cleared in no time, when Gideon, drawing his chair up to the fire, gave a rude slap on the lady's shoulder, saying, "Sarah, I have bought another factory!"

"Good heavens, Mr. Crispin, what will you do with three factories?"

"That is my lookout."

"But how are you going to pay for it?"

"Pooh, credit, woman—credit is everything."

"Well, but to stock it?"

"Credit," said Gid again.

"And to pay your operatives?"

"Credit, I tell you, from first to last."

"Now, Sarah, hear me. I shall have an immense estate in my hands, and I calculate to sweat the banks, or my endorsers—as long as I can borrow of one to pay another. However, I will, when that fails, make an assignment of all my estate, which, to be of any value to them, you must sign."

"Well, you must hold off, and they will offer you ten, twenty, thirty thousand dollars. Still hold on, until, perhaps, it will amount to fifty or sixty; then you may clinch. That will support us elegantly through life, and we can still figure among the aristocracy.

"Remember, I began life without a shilling; I shall end it, after all, a rich man, and just as much respected. To cheat people out of thousands is no disgrace; but of a few paltry dollars it would be. Our children, after all, will not lose their standing in society; I shall be a great man, for these factories I have a man ready to purchase back for me, with a quarter of the money they cost. *They* must have the



## THE ASSIGNMENT

money, the poor devils, and in a few days I stand up with all my property paid for, and a snug little fortune in my pocket; and I lead such an army to the polls, the rascals won't dare to growl at me. If they do, I'll threaten to make my men vote the other ticket. So that, don't you see, I have got the staff in my hands. All this I will do, and make the assignment within a few months."

Gid kept his word—and hark! I hear his chariot wheels now, as they roll over the necks of his dupes!



Ruth Glenn





## Ruth Glenn\*

By MRS. CATHERINE R. WILLIAMS

ON the side of a beautiful little cove or inlet on our New England coast, there is a thicket of buildings entirely hid by the jutting rocks on one side, and a high rocky hill, which divides this picturesque village from the farms on the other. Upon entering this sequestered cove, where it is no uncommon thing to see twenty or thirty sloops and other small craft at anchor, you would suppose that these buildings stood very near together, but as you advance you perceive that each appears to stand isolated by itself, and divided from its neighbor by a huge cliff of rocks, which, often projecting out into the water, completely separates, not only the buildings, but also the little patch of ground which, wrested from nature, gives evidence of the industry, enter-

\* Williams, *Annals of the Aristocracy*. Providence, 1845.

prise, and economy of the inhabitants, who have made even the crevices in the rocks fruitful, and have brought the most sterile soil into successful cultivation.

If that man who can make two ears of corn grow where only one grew before is a benefactor to his country, surely he who makes a wilderness a garden must be eminently so; and a garden in truth was this pretty little hamlet with its rosebushes climbing into the windows, and green shrubbery almost covering the fronts of buildings protected by huge rocks in the rear. One thing only looked like business in the place, and that was a store standing out upon a long wharf, and having on the waterside machinery of ropes, blocks and pulleys to hoist freight on board the coasting craft that annually went from and came to this place. This store, be it understood, was only a storehouse, and therefore when not employed in laying in or fitting out cargoes, was untenanted and still as death, save for the hollow sound of the wind through the machinery, and the creaking of ropes as they swung in the blast. I recollect being terribly frightened there, one evening, by these sounds, and though I had never seen a gibbet in this country, I concluded that this must certainly be one. Outward-bound vessels, as well as others blown in upon the coast, would often put in to the little cove for shelter, and huddle together within talking distance of each other. Dialogues were frequently carried on of a most amusing character, while the lights, dancing about from different parts of the vessels, and the boats, passing and repassing to the shore, would give an air of fairy festivity to the scene.

There was a crooked path called a road, which gave ingress and egress to the village, and indeed led through it, although it was like doubling Cape Horn to go round it. Within about three-quarters of a mile—that is, if a straight line could be drawn—there was a large and commodious, though somewhat old-fashioned public house, where in the summer season, and especially in the season of sea bathing, there was then, and still is, a continual flow of company,

most of whom came for the benefit of the salt water and pure air.

There is an old meeting-house still standing near—I am afraid my readers will find out the spot by this, and I did not intend they should, but the story is too good to be lost—where during the war that gave independence to our country a stout battle was fought, and as an old man in the vicinity told us, “the Britishers were beat off.” The house at that time was completely riddled by grapeshot, and how many men, if any, were killed, we are not able to say; but this is a fact, that the cannon fired upon the shipping was fired out of the meeting-house windows. The enemy, in return, sent the shots pell-mell through every part of the building, but finding the fire from the sacred edifice nothing slackened, though every part of it seemed just ready to tumble in, they began to consider of the waste of powder, and reflecting that the capture of an old meeting-house, after all, would not amount to much, at length moored off and left the victorious Yankees masters of the ground; who, after putting out the fire, for the building was on fire in several places, retreated to the public house and had a most edifying carousal. By great good luck the English did not return that night, or it might have been less easy to conquer them than it was in the morning—but to the story.

We observed that there was a steep and rocky hill at the back of this little neighborhood. Patches of verdure were occasionally seen on its sides, and upon one of these, about midway, there stood a small cottage, most picturesquely placed, since its windows commanded a clear view of the whole cove, and the outlet, too; while through a cliff on the opposite side you had a glimpse of the ocean beyond, and could see every vessel that passed long before she wound into the basin. A beautiful rivulet trickled down the rocks by the side of this cottage and crossed the road below, where a rustic bridge was thrown over it.

The inhabitants of this cottage were a woman and three children, in summer; and in winter there was one man, a



sailor and master of the family, whose little coaster was generally laid up through that season. Thomas Glenn was a good-natured, easy man, with a handsome, blooming woman for a wife, and three as pretty children as any palace could show. It was edifying to see the bustle, when the colors of Thomas' little craft were first discernible through the gap above-mentioned. What wild and tumultuous joy greeted his return from a voyage! The two eldest (both girls) would wait on the wharf until he came up, and when he appeared climbing the hill, each little hand locked in his, he would purposely hang back, to see each little creature strain her tiny joints to pull him up hill, and exult in the supposition that he could not have gained the ascent without her assistance, while the little boy in his mother's arms was crowing and clapping his hands to see the sport.

In our country, let us devotedly thank God for it, the poor have many joys. It is seldom, except where there is idleness or intemperance, that families are miserably poor, especially in New England. A day laborer with health can always provide three comfortable meals a day for his family, and with economy lay up a little besides; but there is a lamentable lack of foresight among that people, as well as among other classes in our country—there is no laying by for a rainy day, and this was the case with our friend Thomas. Alas! he thought, poor man, that there was time enough yet to begin economy, and that he worked hard enough (as he expressed it) at sea, to fare well on land. Accordingly, he was no sooner ashore than he commenced a system of feasting, of animal enjoyment, eating and drinking as fast as possible, to make up for lost time. His helpmate, more prudent than himself, thought differently on the subject, and ventured once in a while to remind him of the necessity of laying up something for their children; but to all her remonstrances he turned a deaf ear, and would invariably answer, "I am young and stout, and it will be time enough to think of that when my timbers begin to give way"; and then to the deep sigh of his helpmate would pat

her on the cheek, with, "Come, Lucy, don't look so down, cheer up and let's enjoy life while we can."

Poor Thomas! These were almost his last words when he embarked on his last voyage. But what boots it to tell the melancholy particulars, to describe the anguish of his faithful Lucy when she saw the little coaster coming in half-masted, and too surely guessed what calamity had overwhelmed them! The coaster fired no gun as she came in, as was her practice; the little swivel was not used, but in gloomy and foreboding silence slowly wound into the basin.

A little knot of men and women collected on the wharf were talking in a low voice, but no shouting or hailing was heard. Suddenly there was a wild shriek, and, pale as marble and with disheveled hair, Lucy rushed down the hill and made for the wharf. The pitying women threw their arms around her and stopped her ere she reached it, just as the word was passing from mouth to mouth, "The Captain is dead!" She was borne into a neighboring house and prudently detained there until the body of Captain Glenn was carried to his home. He was buried the following day, and the widow had one more pang reserved for her, which was to learn that he left no property of any consequence, and that, hereafter, she and her three orphans were to be dependent upon the labor of her hands.

The necessity for exertion awoke the widow from that appalling stupefaction that sometimes succeeds the first outbreak of grief. She felt she was a mother, and that the good of those little ones demanded instant energy; and to the astonishment of the gentlemen who called on her to know whom she would choose to administer upon the estate of her deceased husband, she answered that she should do that herself. It was in vain that they endeavored to dissuade her. Somehow she had gotten an idea of what she was about, greatly to the disappointment of several of her officious neighbors who had calculated on the job. There was singular wisdom in her decision, for more widows' houses are robbed by means of administrating upon estates than by

any other; and the woman who can read and write, and permits such an important office to be filled by another, is a simpleton.

By her prudent management in settling the estate she made out to save the little cottage where she lived—a place endeared to her by many tender recollections. It was here she had first removed when Thomas called her his bride; and here her three dear children had stepped upon the threshold of time. Here she last saw that dear husband whose sudden and painful death had afflicted her so much.

Thomas had been carried off by the pleurisy within a day's sail of his home, and the pains of his illness were increased by the agonizing reflection that he was so near, and yet never to see it again in this life. His last prayers were for his family, and his last message to his wife, "to keep their little cottage, if possible, and keep the children together."

To do this the forlorn widow had decided, come what might; and she set about, early, training those dear little ones to be useful. She taught her eldest, a beautiful little girl called Ruth, to take care of the other two, of which one was four and the other two years of age. Ruth was only seven, but she was a most remarkable child and had an understanding much above her years. There was no good school in the village at that time, and the widow herself taught her children to read, and sew, and perform many little household duties which children of that age are generally ignorant of. Much of their time was engrossed in making seines, or nets for the fishermen in the neighborhood. This business did very well for one part of the year, and Lucy found it prudent to secure something for the other part—and in this she was successful, through means of the benevolent landlady at the Inn, who managed to secure washing and ironing from some of her fashionable boarders. This she used to send up, packed on a horse, for there was nothing but a bridle path from the village up to the cottage—the distance was indeed short, but so steep of ascent that the

tortuous path, winding among rocks and barberry bushes, was somewhat of a journey.

This kind of life, with little variation, continued for several years. Ruth grew in stature and understanding, and her beauty increased almost daily, and soon began to create some interest in the village. No little party was contrived without an invitation to the fair orphan; and whenever she appeared, all eyes seemed at once directed to her. Yet the compliments paid her, and the admiration excited by her exceeding comeliness, failed to excite pride and ambition. She was still the same humble, gentle creature as when she knew no higher employment than to rock the cradle and weed their little garden.

Ruth was about fourteen when a circumstance occurred that seemed to have a material effect upon her mind, manners and destiny. It was on a night during the equinoctial gale that the inhabitants of the cottage were aroused by the sound of signal guns from some vessel in distress. There were no inhabitants of the cottage except Lucy's family and a maiden lady to whom she had spared a room ever since her state of widowhood, both on account of the addition to her income and because she dared not live alone in the building. The family had just seated themselves at their evening employment of making seines, though many fearful glances were cast toward the windows by the younger part of the company, for the little cottage on this tempestuous night rocked like a cradle, and the windows every moment threatened to come in.

"There is trouble," exclaimed the old lady, who usually spent her evenings with the family. "There is trouble," she said again, throwing down her knitting, and rushing to the window as the signal gun was again heard above the bellowing tempest. One glance toward the sea convinced Mrs. Glenn there was no time to be lost, for, far as she could see, a noble ship was driving toward the rocks with furious speed; she was scudding under bare poles, but to human view it looked as if nothing could stop her onward progress. The

white-crested billows at times seemed almost to cover her, when again she would emerge and be ready for a fresh plunge, and each one seemed fearfully to accelerate her progress to destruction. Lights had indeed been raised in every practicable place, and every means sought to show the entrance to the little cove, which once entered, she would be safe; but the danger was that she would come upon the rocks before she could discover it, for it was evidently a stranger who was now fighting her way to some place of shelter. Lanterns were fixed near the entrance, but they were too low, and the inhabitants, who had all turned out, were deliberating what they could do next, in the greatest terror and consternation.

Prompt in all her efforts to do good, it was not many minutes before the cottage on the cliff looked like one blaze of light—the reflection of which, falling on the water below, and far out beyond it, discovered to the bewildered mariners the passage they were in search of—and just as she was about given up, the gallant vessel with one tremendous lurch suddenly changed her course, and in a few moments was safely riding at anchor in the sheltered cove. The cheering was immense, and even within the hour a message arrived from the captain of the strange bark, to say that his gratitude to the widow was unbounded, and, if agreeable, he would pay his respects in the morning. He came, and seldom had the inhabitants of the cottage looked upon so elegant a man; seldom had the fair and virtuous Ruth listened to language so polished, to a voice so musical, and to compliments so acceptable, as she now heard. Every day a present of tropical fruits, or something else nice, was sent from the ship, though the captain, who had to see to the refitting for the few days they lay there, only called once or twice afterwards. In order, however, to show his gratitude to the good people of the village, the night before they sailed he gave a ball on board ship, to which all were indiscriminately invited, and no excuse would avail but the widow and her two girls must attend. At the close of it their host took a very affec-

tionate leave of them, kissing the two little girls, and shaking the hand of the mother with many grateful wishes for her happiness, and trusting "the time might come when he should be enabled in some way to prove his gratitude."

Four years, however, passed away, and he was never heard from, and indeed it was not expected he would be. Lucy was not so ignorant of the world as to suppose that the prosperous and happy would remember the poor and unfortunate, and with true feminine feeling and excellent judgment, she forbore to speak of him often, not knowing the effect it might have upon her sensitive daughter, for the devoted attention with which she had listened to his words and the sweet confusion of her manner when he first led her out to dance, had not escaped her.

Four years of profitable employment in attending to the opening minds of her little sister and brother, and in lightening the load of care from her widowed mother, had nearly eradicated the remembrance of the elegant and accomplished Capt. M—— when, from a combination of causes, the prospects of this little family became changed. A year's ill health of the mother, occasioned by close attendance on her youngest daughter during a fever, had not only robbed them of employment, but put them far back in point of worldly comforts, and threatened to involve them deeply unless some new expedient could be devised to mend their circumstances. The little boy had already been apprenticed to a blacksmith in the neighborhood, and the youngest girl and her mother were yet too feeble to do much.

In this dilemma Ruth resorted to their old friend the landlady, who was just then in want of an upper servant—a kind of genteel domestic, as she said, who was to officiate as a housekeeper, but whose attendance at table could in no way be dispensed with. From this exposure Ruth seemed to shrink, but such was their poverty and increasing want that she felt there was no alternative, and finally closed with the offers of the landlady and agreed to fill the place. Bitter were the tears of the mother when she announced to her the



determination she had made, and long did she wrestle with her fears before she would consent to place her beautiful, artless, and beloved daughter in so perilous a situation. Feeling at length that it was her duty to yield, situated as they were, and that Providence had provided this timely aid to supply their wants, she consented, and in a few days Ruth was established in her new quarters.

It was during a violent warm summer, when fashion and convenience had driven so many of the inhabitants of our cities to the seaside, that Ruth commenced her novitiate at the Inn. The house was daily filling up with company, and many were the bold looks and sly jokes from some of the young men, upon seeing so beautiful a young girl attending the table. Ruth felt at first as though sinking through the floor; but discretion shut her lips and nerved her heart, and she felt she must endure. On one occasion, however, as she was handing a cup of coffee to a stranger, he looked up, and she discovered the face of the handsome captain she had danced with four years before. We will not say that there was not a blush of false shame for a moment at being found by that ever-to-be-remembered person in so humble an occupation, and a something of humiliation at the thought of how different her situation was from that of the gayly dressed belles who sat opposite to him at table. But these feelings were transient, and her well-regulated mind soon recovered its balance. Even he, much as he knew of the world, was at a loss to discover whether she recognized him.

Captain M—— was a proud man, and for a moment he felt a kind of contempt for a girl that would degrade herself so much, as he conceived it, as to become the "Maid of an Inn." But when he looked at her sweet, innocent countenance, and observed the great propriety of her manner, which, while it assumed nothing, was of a kind that kept all undue familiarity at a distance, and saw that she performed her servile duties with an alacrity and cheerfulness and courtesy that was perfectly enchanting, he felt that he could not



despise her. And again her dress, so perfectly proper for her situation—a clean calico frock, made high in the neck, with a white cambric apron, her hair parted smooth on her forehead, and nothing like ornament to set off a person, which, to say the truth, nature had done sufficient for without the aid of art.

For some time after the company rose from the table, the captain continued to fumble his knife and fork, deliberating whether it were best to make himself known to the fair maid of the inn. At length he decided to let the occasion go by until he could ascertain from the landlady what was the cause of Ruth's transformation, and whether choice or necessity had led her to her present employment. Accordingly, in the course of the day he took the opportunity of questioning that personage, and learned from her the situation of poor Mrs. Glenn and her invalid daughter, and what exertions this exemplary child had made to provide for the family, and how she came to engage in her present undertaking, and while listening to the story felt ashamed to think that he should for a moment have looked down upon her. He requested the landlady to send her to the parlor, as he wished to make personal inquiries about her mother, from whom he had once received, he stated, a great favor, and "to whom he should always feel under the greatest obligation." The landlady stared, but was too polite to ask any questions, and immediately sent Ruth in. The captain rose respectfully, on her entrance, and, offering his hand, asked if she knew him. She raised her eyes a moment, and said:

"I believe it is Captain M——. How delighted my mother would be to see you!"

"I should be most happy to meet that good lady once more," replied the captain. "And is there no one, besides, glad to see me? Are not you, Ruth, glad to see me?"

"I am, indeed, very, very glad to see you, Captain M——," said Ruth, without any affectation, "particularly as we were very anxious about you after your departure.

We had some rough weather before you could have got off the coast."

"That is true—and so you thought of me, Ruth. And have you never thought of me since?" This was a home question—but it met with an equally candid answer.

"Indeed, sir, I have often. I have sometimes thought, if you were alive, you might visit our village again (dropping her eyes). You admired it so much."

The captain smiled.

"But, Ruth, it must be rather irksome to perform the duties you have here, and—and—do you not sometimes feel unhappy in a situation so much beneath you?"

The countenance of the young girl changed, but in a moment after she became collected and replied:

"I should be very ungrateful to feel so, sir. I confess that when the lady of this house first offered me the situation I now enjoy, there was a feeling of repugnance at the idea of the exposure it would subject me to. I could not bear to be stared at; but when I thought it must be pride, I endeavored to conquer it, and felt that I ought to be very grateful for a chance to provide for my dear family. Oh, sir, I have one of the best of mothers. No tongue can tell with what tenderness she has watched over us, and what trials she has undergone to provide us with bread. I recollect, on one occasion I made a vow, when a little child, that I would never think anything too much that I could do for such a mother"—and her lip quivered with emotion.

"Will you relate the occasion, Ruth?" said Captain M——, who felt his interest momentarily increase in the beautiful and artless girl.

"Yes, sir," said Ruth, and she commenced, though with a violent effort at composure. "It was in the depth of winter, and my poor mother had been down here to assist in preparations for a New Year's ball. She was obliged to bring us with her, as our tenant was away, and put us into the nursery here while she made the pastry, etc. Not wishing us to remain on the evening of the entertainment she de-

parted, just at night, for the cottage. A snowstorm was commencing, and it was most intensely cold. Long before we arrived at the bottom of the hill it was perfectly blinding; yet, discovering by a light in the cottage that the old lady had returned, we pushed on, although we could not see the path. We had not proceeded far, when, one after another, we both gave out. Mother carried our little brother; and then my sister, on the other arm. I followed, until blinded and bewildered and benumbed with the cold, I could go no farther. We had lost the path completely, and knew not exactly where we were. Never can I forget the anguish of my dear parent, nor her fervent prayer to be able to save the lives of her dear children. Stooping down she commanded me to get on her back, and hold round her neck. It was with difficulty that I could hold on—my little hands were so benumbed—but she had not proceeded far before she again descried the light in our cottage, and oh, how she tried to encourage us while she climbed the rocks and banks, and struggled on thus encumbered, until with a cry of rejoicing she reached the door, which was immediately opened by the old lady, who used every effort to restore us, as we were all more or less frozen.

“Little did the gay party at the Inn realize what was going on in our cottage that night! I think if they had known that the hands that had prepared their sumptuous feast were then frozen, they could not have enjoyed it. That night was a memorable one to me; my own sufferings were great, but when I looked in the face of my dear, suffering parent, and recollected her unequalled exertions to save us, young as I was my heart overflowed with gratitude, and I then made a vow that I would never think anything hard to serve such a friend, and that my life should be devoted to her comfort. I think myself singularly happy, in my present situation, that I can be near her.”

The captain had sat with his elbow on the table, resting his cheek on his hand, which by degrees passed over his eyes to hide the tears which he felt he could not restrain. The

mention of the light in the cottage had brought to mind the dismal night in which he was, for all he knew to the contrary, rescued from death by the exertions of the same benevolent woman, and he wondered he could have neglected them so long. He might still have done so, had not some of his fashionable acquaintances invited him to come to this very place, on a trip of pleasure.

That evening he visited the widow, and the next day, to the great regret and wonderment of the Southern beaux, and the no less disappointment of the good landlady, the beautiful attendant was missing from the Inn. But the mystery was cleared up when, at the end of a few weeks, the modest, blushing Ruth was led to the altar in a neighboring town by Captain M——, who, contrary to all precedent, was not ashamed of the former station of his wife, as he brought her to the Inn the same evening, and introduced her to the astonished household as his bride. In fact, they took up their quarters there until the season warned them to go South.

Reader, this is not a romance. We were stopping at that very house in the autumn of that year; and upon entering the dining hall we observed the portrait of a fine-looking man of middle age and a most beautiful girl beside it. We inquired of one of the attendants who they were, and were told that the captain had them painted for this house, and desired them hung in this room as a memento to all future attendants of the reward of virtue. We know not but the widow still lives. Ruth, we know, does, and presides with great taste in her Southern home, surrounded by a numerous family of sons and daughters. A friend of ours saw her there within a few years. She informed us that the captain was in the army during the last war, and had the honor of fighting in the battle of New Orleans. Since then we have seen her ourselves.

The old lady could not leave her cottage; her son married, and went to reside with her. If we recollect right, he mar-

ried a daughter of the benevolent landlady. The cottage has been much enlarged, and contains a suite of rooms occupied every summer by the Southern family and built exclusively for that purpose by Captain M——.













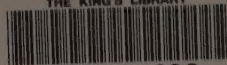


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